Houdini's Disaster

Duel or Dishonour

Alberta's Black Gold

The Beaver

CANADA'S HISTORY MAGAZINE

June | July 2009

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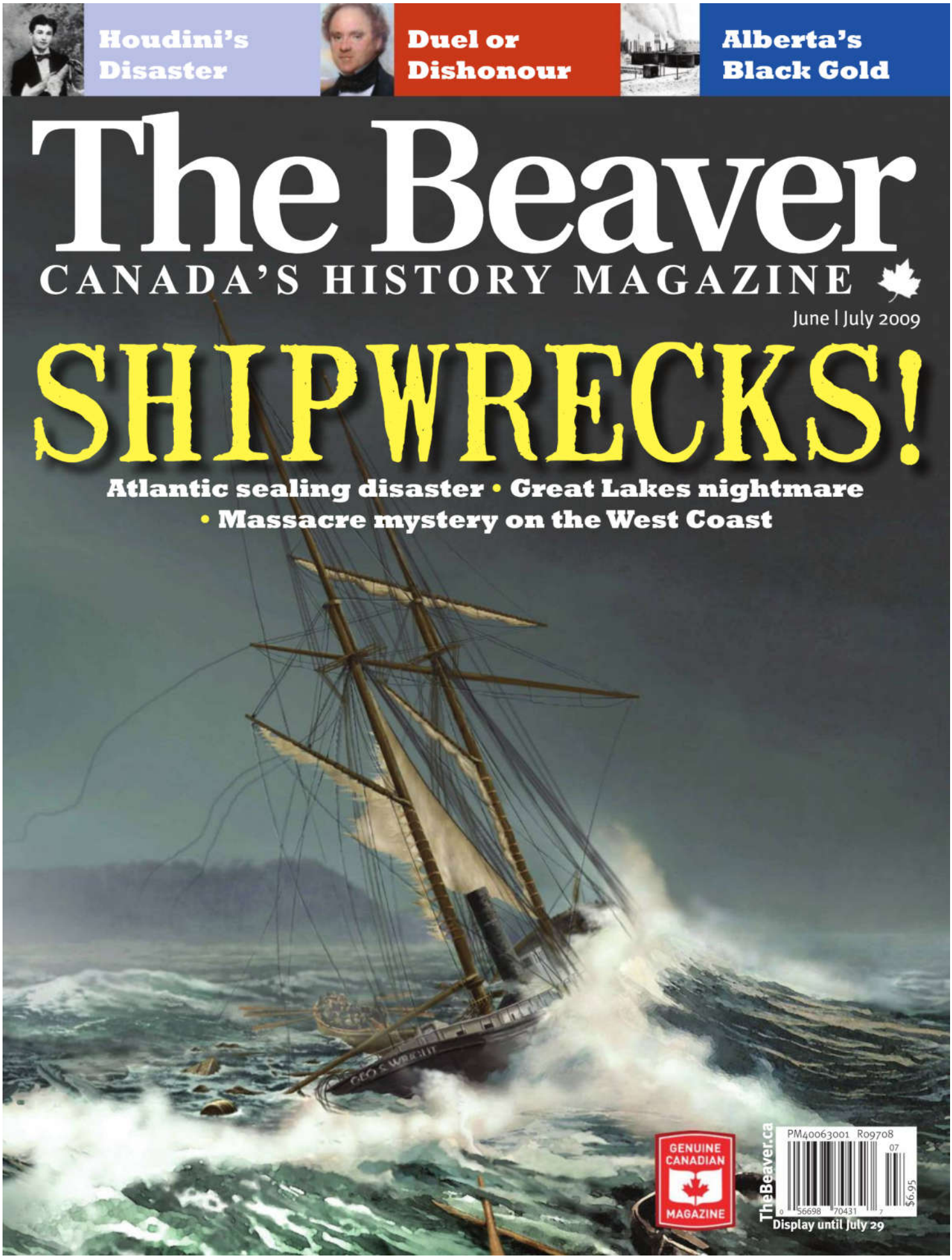

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Canada

COVER: PETER RINDLISBACHER

Stopping the presses

Here's a rule of thumb: When newspapers themselves make headlines, it equals bad news for the news industry. Layoffs, downsizing, and even outright closures have hit the fourth estate throughout North America. The upstart Halifax *Daily News* has ceased publication altogether, as have several major, long-established newspapers in the United States.

It's enough to make Joe Howe roll in his grave.

Joseph Howe — the subject of this issue's article "Duel or Dishonour" — is the father of freedom of the press in Canada. Born in Halifax in 1804, Howe was the son of a journalist and printer. In 1828, he bought a local newspaper, the *Novascotian*, and then proceeded to outrage local luminaries by having the audacity to print the truth. This was an age in which journalists could be imprisoned for impugning the reputations of the powerful. Indeed, Howe's insistence on straight talk is what led to his being repeatedly challenged to duels.

MARIANNE HELM

In 1835, Howe's newspaper ran a letter attacking the way Halifax's financial affairs were managed. He was subsequently sued for libel. Howe was no lawyer, nor was he an orator of note. But for almost six and a half hours, he stood at his trial and argued passionately for the right to report the truth. "Yes gentlemen," he said, "come what will, while I live, Nova Scotia shall have the blessing of an open and unshackled press." The judge ordered the jury to convict, but they refused.

Now, I must confess that my objectivity — that driving creed of all journalists — is somewhat compromised as I write this. Throughout my career, I've worked for every breed of newspaper there is, from small weeklies to local, provincial, and big-city dailies. I've also worked for a national news service. I admit it — when it comes to the future of newspapers, I'm anything but objective.

So what, do you ask, does any of this have to do with history?

Well, everything, actually. There's a reason why journalism is called "the first rough draft of history." Many of our great history writers — including, arguably, the greatest, Pierre Berton — got their start among the ink-stained multitudes.

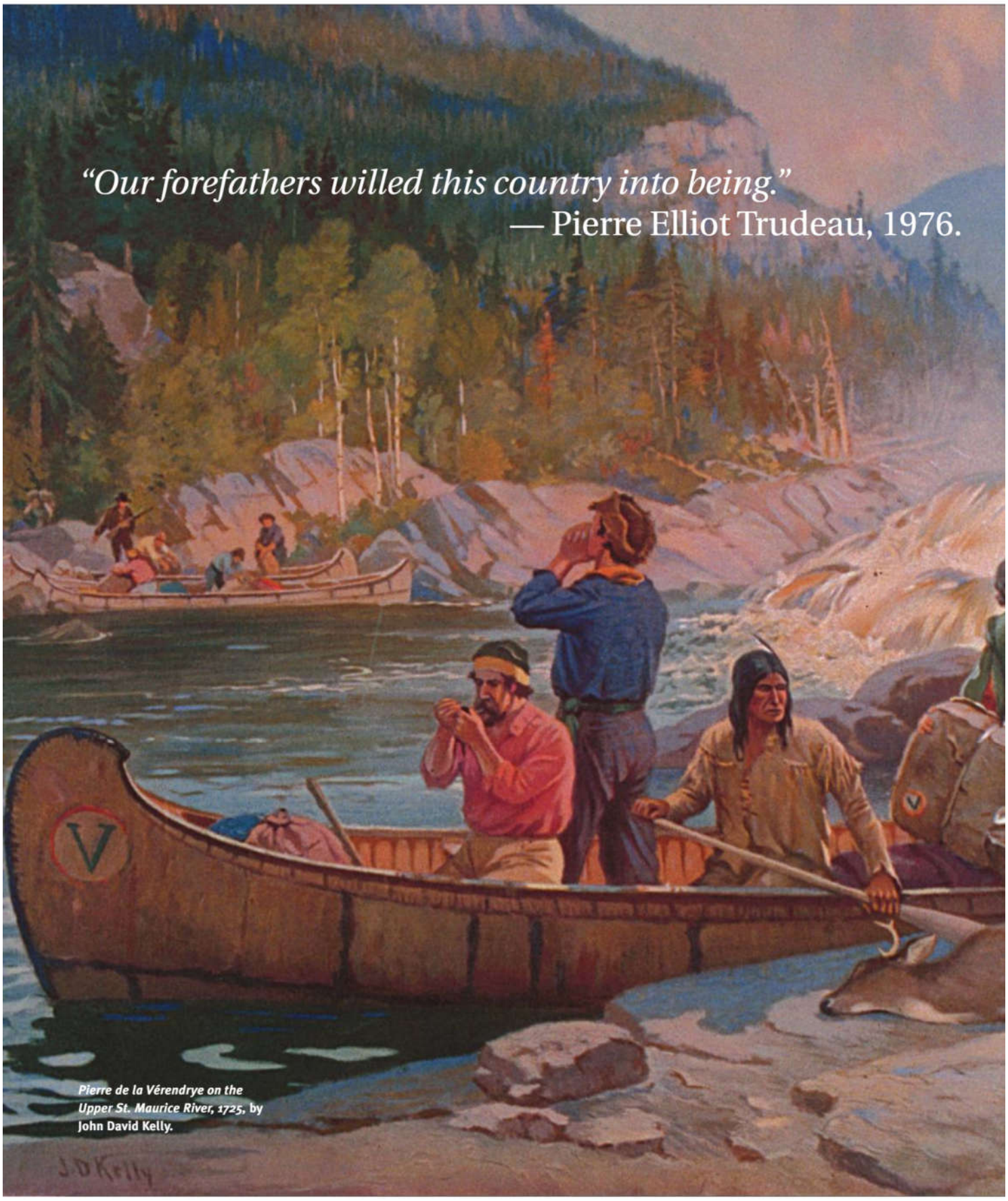
Meanwhile, for historians and archivists, newspapers are a crucial research resource. In this issue, for instance, the story "Steamer into Oblivion" features a clipping from an 1873 *New York Times* story that provides key details of the search for the wrecked ship *Geo S. Wright*. In "The Sinking of the Southern Cross," a 1914 story in the St. John's *Evening Telegram* speaks to the heartbreak and fading hope felt by the victims' families: "No tidings of the *Southern Cross*. Her absence is causing grave anxiety."

In the coming years, more newspapers will fold, while others will move exclusively online. As this happens, I fear a key primary source for future historians will be lost. Online newspapers will have fewer staff reporters and increasingly rely on the same official sources for stories — and that's bad news for all of us.

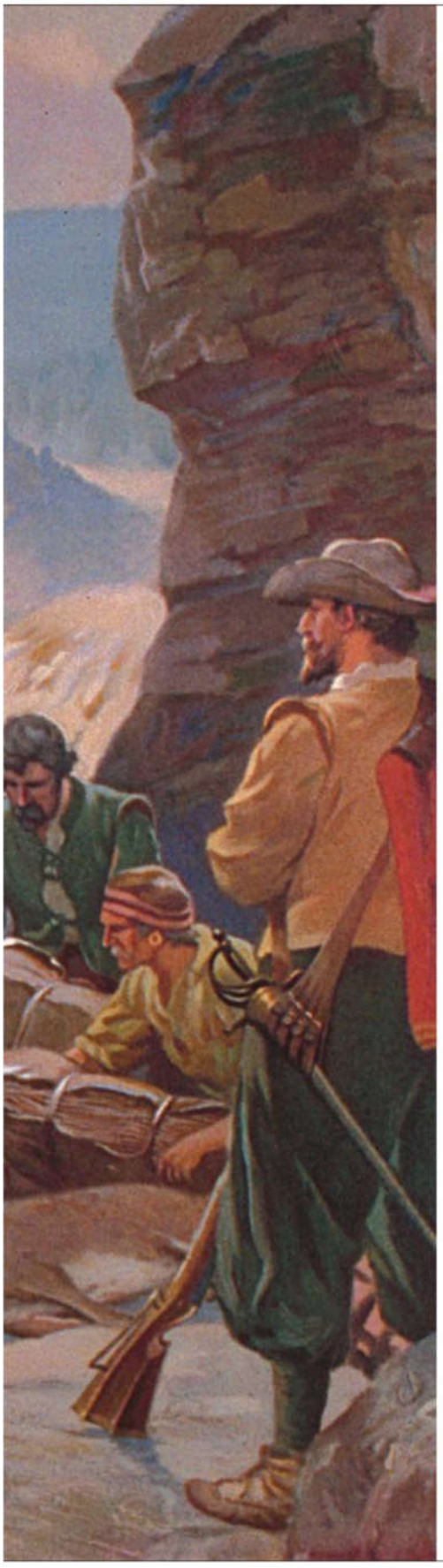
These are troubling times for anyone who is passionate about journalism. We are literally watching newspapers fade away — and history will be the poorer for it.

Mark Reid

Mark Reid, Editor
editors@historysociety.ca



Pierre de la Vérendrye on the Upper St. Maurice River, 1725, by John David Kelly.



The Beaver

June | July 2009 Vol. 89:3

Features

Sinking of the Southern Cross BY TIM B. ROGERS **16**

The sinking of the SS *Southern Cross* marked the greatest loss of life in Newfoundland's sealing history.

Steamer into Oblivion BY RICK JAMES **24**

Questions still remain about the fate of those aboard a doomed West Coast steamer. Were they massacred? If so, who did it?

The Sorcerer's Ship BY DOUGLAS HUNTER **30**

The sinking of the oddly named *Waubuno* is one of the strangest in Georgian Bay's history.

Duel or Dishonour BY HAROLD R. THOMPSON **35**

When Nova Scotia newspaperman Joseph Howe refused to tone down his editorials, a fight to the death seemed inevitable.

Hard Times in the Maritimes BY BRUCE MACNAB **38**

Monkey business and mistaken identity conspired to turn Harry Houdini's first international tour into a disaster.

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MCCORD MUSEUM

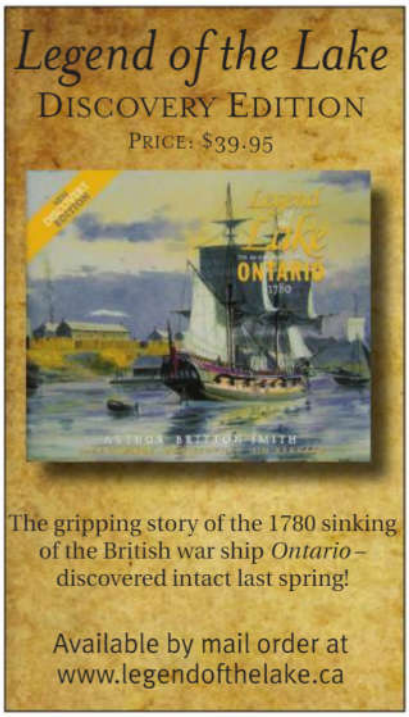
Letters

Dramatic presentation

Congratulations on your inspiring cover story on the Viola Desmond ("Canada's Rosa Parks," April-May 2009).

I had the privilege of script editing a 2007 CBC Radio play that dramatized Viola Desmond's life and the events of 1946 in New Glasgow. The drama, written by playwright Marcia Johnson, was a hit with CBC listeners when it was broadcast on *The Sunday Edition*. To the best of my knowledge, the radio recording is not available for purchase, but Ms. Johnson's script can be ordered from the Playwrights Guild of Canada. Viola Desmond (the radio play) would make a unique teaching opportunity for history classes, with plenty of great roles for student actors.

DAVE CARLEY
VIA EMAIL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Human wrongs and rights

Thank you for the most recent issue of *The Beaver* (April-May 2009). I was delighted to see the story about Viola Desmond.

In Nova Scotia, and probably all over Canada, the real story of our black population is less about their enslavement than their being treated as second-class citizens for so long. Multi-generational slavery was not their Canadian experience; marginalization has been, and sometimes, I regret to say, still is. Kudos for telling the tale to a wider audience.

TERRY PUNCH
VIA EMAIL

Sounding off

Thanks for the very interesting article "Making Noise" (April-May 2009). Hollywood was all about making money, and there was lots of it to be made with silent films. So there was a lot of resistance to spending money for innovation until there was a demand. But there were always those like Douglas Shearer who thought ahead and were ready when the time came.

Sound is the one self-effacing component of the motion picture. You can admire the sets, love the costumes, be impressed by the action, and idolize the players. Music can engage the emotions. But the sound is just supposed to be there as if it was all somehow picked up by the camera. A soundtrack is put together by a large team of dedicated people who strive not to be noticed at all.

LOCK JOHNSTON
HILLSDALE, ONTARIO

Disney's Canadian connection

In "Making Noise" (April-May 2009), the story of Douglas Shearer informs us about the success of a Canadian in the movie industry. However, the list of "Made in Canada: Hollywood's Brightest Lights" — even though it was not intended to be all-inclusive — may have allowed one of the brightest to hide out south of the border. The man is Walt Disney.

Apparently, Disney was indefinite and even evasive about his place of birth and would never produce a birth certificate. There is a record in which Disney stated that he was born in Goderich, Ontario, and that he thought that he was a Canadian. See *The True Intrepid, Sir William Stephenson and the Unknown Agents* by Bill Macdonald.

FRED CATTERALL
SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN

Canadian stars

Your "Made in Canada" list accompanying the Douglas Shearer article (April-May 2009) omitted one of our most-loved movie stars — Marie Dressler.

She was born Leila Marie Koerber, November 9, 1869, in Cobourg, Ontario. She started her career with a travelling acting troupe and eventually became a popular character actress in Hollywood, winning the Academy Award for Best Actress in 1931 for her performance in *Min and Bill*. She died in Santa Barbara, California, July 28, 1934.

HAROLD H. FIREMAN
OTTAWA, ONTARIO

Continuing the hunt

I was very pleased to see the article in the April-May 2009 issue on the reissue of Edward Curtis's *In the Land of the Headhunters*. However, it isn't the whole story to simply say "it surfaced in 1973." In fact, it was discovered and transferred to a usable format by Bill Holm, now retired director of the Burke Museum at the University of Washington, Seattle.

I was able to view this artifact when Bill brought it to Portland State University at the request of Dr. Wayne Suttles. Shown only at the Anthropology Department at that time, I look forward to a full screening when it comes our way. Holm and Suttles (now deceased) have both been major contributors to the understanding of Northwest Coast art and culture.

The contributions of these two men would be well worth attention.

It was Holm's analysis of the formline art technique that helped to restore the art traditions practised by many artists today.

LINDA CRUM
PORTLAND, OREGON

Making music

I was pleased to see Jen Clark's article "Music Synthesizer" in the April-May 2009 issue. It brought back my memories of inventor Hugh Le Caine's wife. Trudi Le Caine was a strong supporter of Ottawa's Espace Musique Concert Series that presented music at the National Gallery of Canada featuring our wealth of Ottawa composers.

In the early '90s, when I was asked if I was interested in having Hugh's clavichord, I jumped at the chance. Unfortunately, my busy life didn't leave me time to play the clavichord, and there is nothing worse than having an instrument lying around not being played.

I contacted professor Gilles Comeau at the University of Ottawa to ask if he might be interested in adding it to their collection of keyboard instruments in their new Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory. It gave me great pleasure to donate it to the keyboard program.

I'm sure the Le Caines would have approved.

PATRICIA HIEMSTRA
TORONTO, ONTARIO

A healthy brew

I enjoyed the article on "Beer Wars" (April-May 2009) but would like to take issue with the sidebar story that said spruce beer was part of the diet of the First Nations of Jacques Cartier's time.

While there's no doubt that the local First Nations gave Cartier's group a drink that helped them relieve scurvy, it can't be called beer. Beer was defined as made from malted grains with water and flavourings and yeast. Spruce is not a grain and therefore cannot malt.

As to which tree the brew that the First Nations fed to Cartier's men came from, please read an excellent article by C. Stuart Houston called "Scurvy and Canadian Exploration" (*Canadian Bulletin of Medical History*, Vol 7). Houston settles on the Eastern White Cedar as the one most likely used.

CONNIE GERWING
PRINCE ALBERT, SASKATCHEWAN

[*Editor's note: the concoction that saved Cartier's men was made in the same manner as 'spruce beer,' for which twigs and needles are first boiled in water.*]

Research and R&R

The Beaver (April-May 2009) refers to the "American Association of Electrical Engineers." It should have been "American Institute of Electrical Engineers," or AIEE. I really enjoyed this issue, "Beer Wars" particularly. Following your suggestion in "Take the Day Off," I took a day off and enjoyed a few beers.

BERNARD BÉLAND
SHERBROOKE, QUÉBEC

The Beaver welcomes readers' comments. E-mail us at editors@historysociety.ca or write to *The Beaver*, PO Box 56060, Portage Place RPO, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 0G9 Canada. Please include your address and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for clarity or length.

New Titles from UBC Press

In Mixed Company
Taverns and Public Life in Upper Canada
JULIA ROBERTS

The records of the past tell stories of time spent in mixed company but also of the myriad, unequal ways that colonists found room in taverns and a place in Upper Canadian culture and society.

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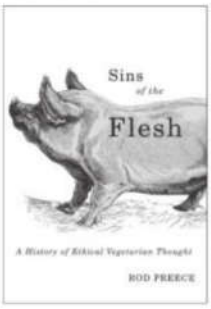
A History of Ethical Vegetarian Thought
ROD PREECE



Unlike previous books on the history of vegetarianism, *Sins of the Flesh* examines the history of vegetarianism in its ethical dimensions, from the origins of humanity through to the present.

This book is a ground-breaking history of ethical vegetarianism that will appeal to all readers concerned with human-animal relations and the foundations of animal rights.

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LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA, C-001690

The Canadian delegation to the 1926 Imperial Conference in London secured the right of former British colonies to an independent foreign policy and their own missions abroad. Left to right: Minister of Justice Ernest Lapointe, Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs W. L. Mackenzie King, industrialist Vincent Massey (future governor general), and Peter Larkin, high commissioner to the United Kingdom.

Putting our affairs in order

Canada's representative to the world celebrates its one hundredth anniversary June 1, 2009. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is now responsible for diplomacy and Canadian economic opportunity around the world, but its beginnings were anything but cosmopolitan.

Officials including Canada's Under-Secretary of State Joseph Pope, the governor general, and the British ambassador in Washington had become frustrated with how difficult it was to communicate with the Canadian government about foreign affairs. Documents were lost or misdirected regularly. So in June 1909, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier created the Department of External Affairs.

There was no room in the East Block of Parliament for the new department, so it moved into the second floor of a barbershop. The six-person staff was responsible for receiving and sorting foreign government correspondence.

In time, the department made a name for itself around the world. Canada's most famous diplomat, Lester Pearson, got his start in the department in the 1920s. As secretary of state for external affairs, Pearson won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 for his role in resolving the 1956 Suez Crisis.

In commemoration of its anniversary, the department has published its history in a limited-run booklet entitled *Punching Above Its Weight*. Visit TheBeaver.ca to see the online version.

— **Jen Clark**

June 7

To note the day in 1576 that Martin Frobisher first set sail from England in search of a northwest passage. Sing along to Stan Rogers.

Currents

Our home & native ...

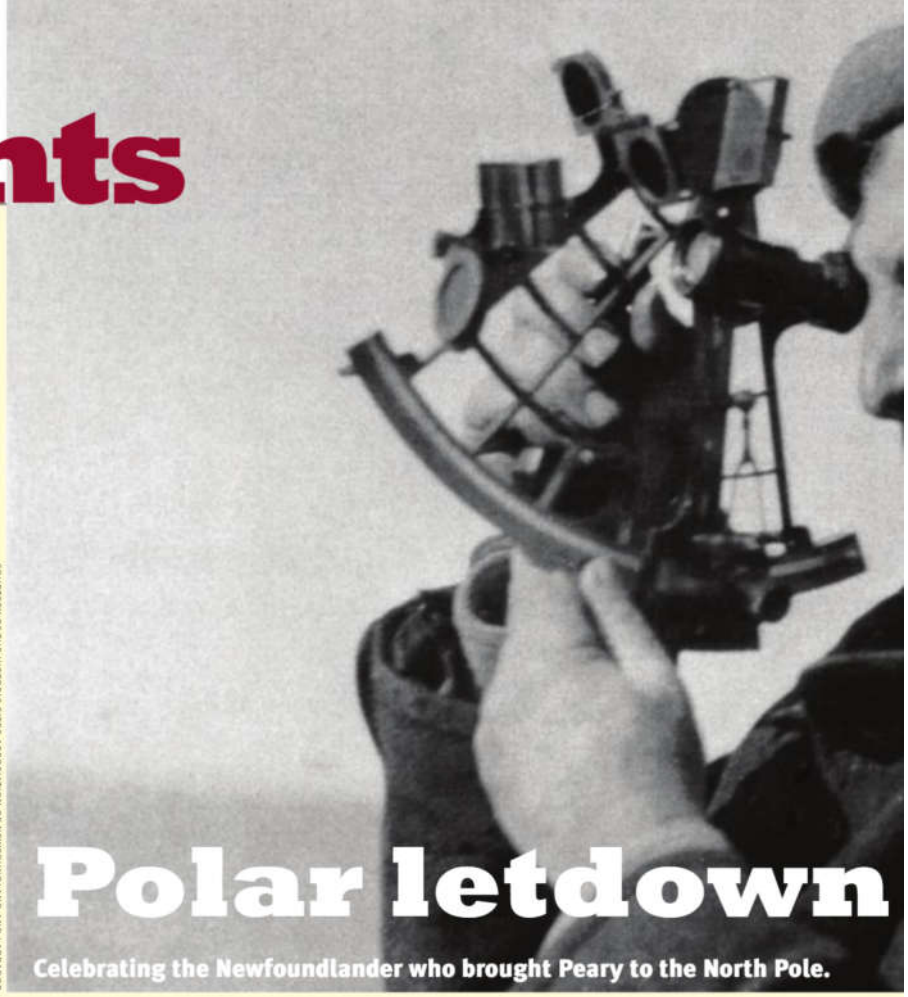
Garbage Bag

The now ubiquitous plastic garbage bag hasn't always existed. In fact, three different Canadians came up with the idea at around the same time.

Winnipegger Harry Wasylyk first made the green bags in his kitchen around 1950. His process involved heating pellets of the durable plastic polyethylene, which were then flattened and stretched. The thin air-proof and waterproof material was finally shaped into sacks. Wasylyk went into business, providing bags to the Winnipeg General Hospital.

Meanwhile, Toronto resident Frank Plomp began supplying hospitals and offices with his own bags, and Larry Hansen, an employee at the Lindsay, Ontario, plant of chemical company Union Carbide, started making bags for use at the plant. When Union Carbide heard about Wasylyk's business, the company bought him out and began making garbage bags using the extra polyethylene produced at its Montreal plant.

The invention was soon marketed to homeowners and was a huge success — today garbage bags and other plastic bags are everywhere. Unfortunately, this has created an environmental challenge. Millions of the bags are disposed of around the world each day. Many end up in landfills, where they take hundreds of years to decompose. **— Jen Clark**



COURTESY OF THE HISTORIC SITES ASSOCIATION OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Polar letdown

Celebrating the Newfoundlander who brought Peary to the North Pole.

One of the most storied sea captains in Newfoundland's history is being celebrated this year for his role in helping Robert E. Peary reach the North Pole.

But ironically, the event Robert Bartlett is being lauded for was one of the biggest disappointments of his life. For Bartlett did not actually get to stand at the top of the world, as he apparently hoped he would. The native of Brigus, Newfoundland, was not chosen to be among the select few to accompany the American explorer Peary on the epic last leg of the journey in April of 1909, even though Bartlett's skill in guiding the exploration ship the *Roosevelt* through the polar ice pack was essential in reaching the Pole.

"Bartlett was not American at the time [he later took out American citizenship], and Peary, as a naval officer with wealthy American backers, was determined to claim the Pole for the good old U.S.A.," says Catherine Dempsey, director of the Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Peary, whose claim to have reached the North Pole has often been contested, chose Matthew Henson, his American assistant, who was a good dog driver, as well as four Inuit men.

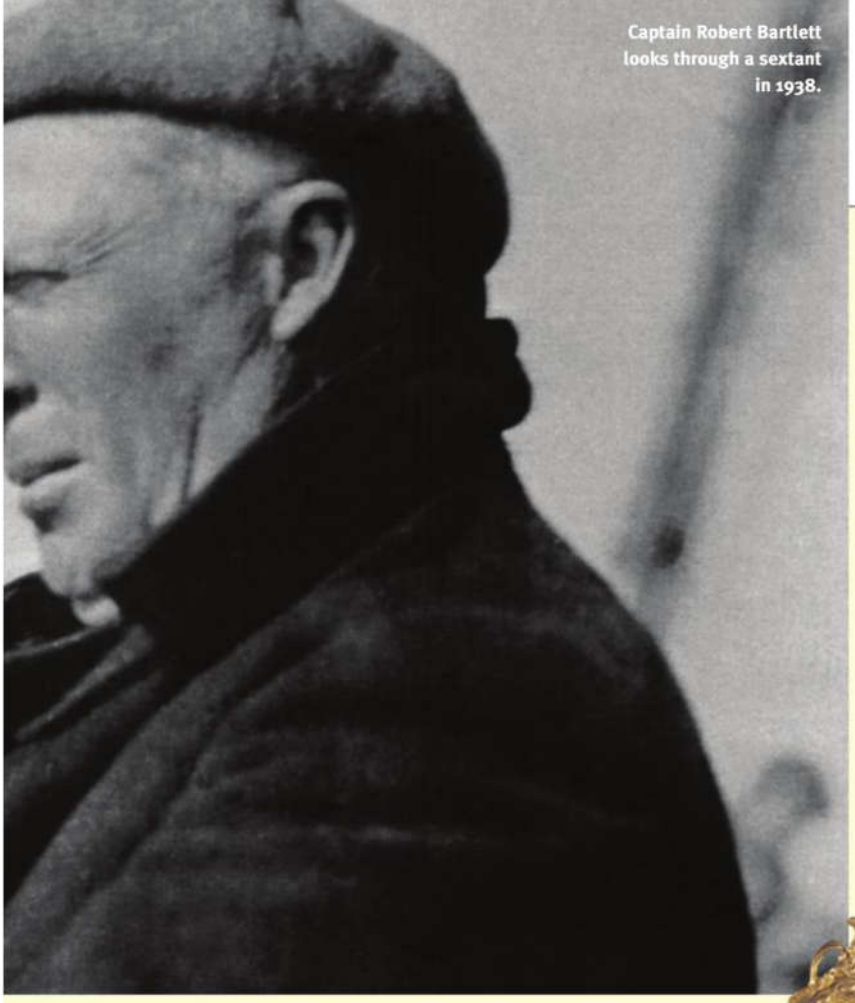
"Because Henson was black, he would not take any glory from Peary," explains Dempsey, who has researched Bartlett's life. "The four Greenland Inughuit didn't even count in anybody's estimation. When one thinks of the time period, imperialism, et

June 13

To celebrate the day in 1898 when the Yukon Territory was established and joined Confederation. Go for gold.

July 5

To note the day in 1935 when the Canadian Wheat Board Act was signed into law. Go with the grain.



Captain Robert Bartlett looks through a sextant in 1938.

cetera, one can understand what happened."

Bartlett admitted in his writings that he was terribly disappointed. Yet he did not hold a grudge and remained fiercely loyal to Peary. As for Peary, he regarded Bartlett as being "as true as the compass." Peary took him to Europe on a celebrity tour after the North Pole feat and the National Geographic Society awarded Bartlett its highest honour, the Hubbard Medal, to recognize his accomplishment.

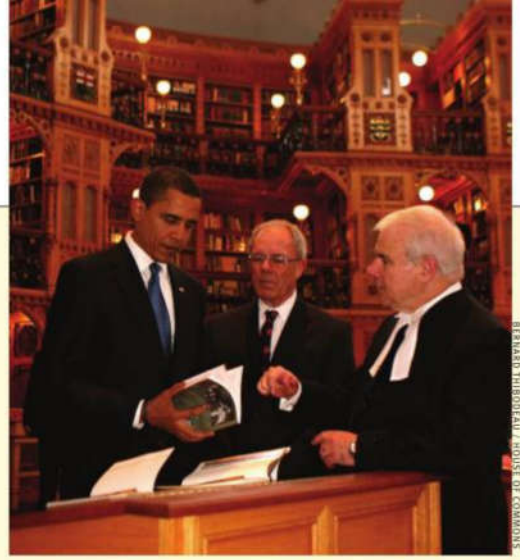
The excitement of polar exploration overtook him like "poison in his veins," as Bartlett put it. A few years later he was part of the Canadian Arctic Expedition as captain of the *Karluk* and made an incredibly arduous and heroic journey to save his crew after the ship was crushed by ice.

In the 1930s and '40s, his highly publicized scientific expeditions to the Arctic made him the Jacques Cousteau of his day.

A cultured man who loved classical music and made New York his home base, Bartlett made about forty Arctic voyages over half a century.

Bartlett has fallen into obscurity in recent years, but the Historic Sites Association has organized a year-long celebration of his life that is listed by the travel publisher Frommer's as one of the world's ten top anniversary celebrations for 2009. For more information, visit The Beaver.ca.

— Nelle Oosterom



BERNARD THIBODEAU / HOUSE OF COMMONS

Obama booked

U.S. President Barack Obama went to Ottawa February 19 for what was his first foreign trip following his inauguration. During his brief visit, Obama was greeted by the Governor General, the prime minister, and other officials, as well as numerous onlookers hoping to catch a glimpse of the popular new leader.

He was also the recipient of two copies of a new essay collection published to commemorate former U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1938 speech at Queen's University. Edited by Arthur Milnes, *In Roosevelt's Bright Shadow* examines the impact of a talk where Roosevelt pledged, as conflict loomed, that if Canada were ever attacked, his nation would defend the Dominion. Roosevelt's address is counted among the most important speeches given by a U.S. president on Canadian soil. The book also includes subsequent addresses to Parliament by U.S. presidents.

Here, President Obama, left, receives a copy of the book from House of Commons Speaker Peter Milliken, right, while parliamentary librarian William Young looks on. MP Bob Rae presented a copy to Obama during his own meeting with the president that same day.

— P.K.

July 8

To observe the day in 1852 when a fire destroyed 1,100 homes and left thousands homeless in Montreal. Check your insurance policy.

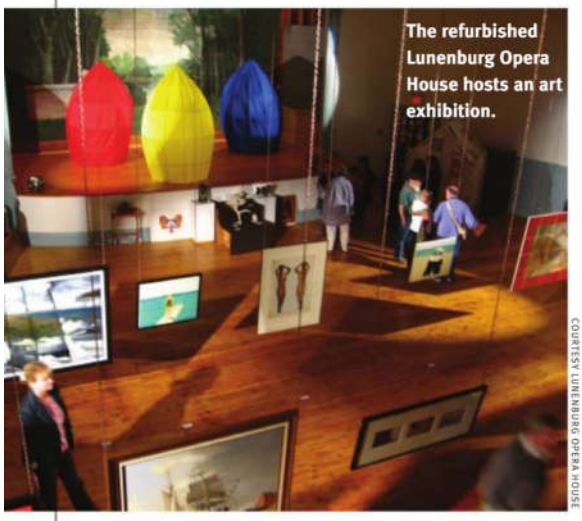
July 31

To mark the day in 1913 when Alys Bryant became the first woman to take a solo flight in Canada. Spread your wings.

Lunenburg's Cinderella story

The century-old Lunenburg Opera House is a unique landmark in the centre of Old Town Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, itself a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Yet the once-majestic building sat crumbling and mostly vacant since the early 1990s — until restoration began in January 2006 under the direction of its new owner, British oil executive Farley Blackman.

Much work has been done to restore the building to its former beauty, including extensive cleaning, painting, and floor refinishing, as well as updates to electrical, lighting, and sound equipment. The interior now features a seventeen-foot-deep stage and room for three hundred seats. (It had been converted to a movie house in the 1940s.)



The refurbished Lunenburg Opera House hosts an art exhibition.

COURTESY LUNENBURG OPERA HOUSE

There is more restoration work to be done, including a new roof and other exterior finishing. But the Opera House has its old shine back — at least on its interior — and has already hosted fundraising concerts and art exhibits. Its official grand opening had been set for January 2009, to coincide with the one hundredth anniversary of its first stage performance, but the date was set back due to a shortage of funding. **— B.T.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF CCA — LAIDLAW SLIDE COLLECTION

By the numbers

Co-ops

Member-owned co-operatives and credit unions are involved in many spheres of Canadian community life and operate in the agricultural, consumer, housing, insurance, and financial sectors. They include such well-known names as Mountain Equipment Co-op, The Co-operators insurance, and Gay Lea Foods. The Co-operative Union of Canada held its first meeting in Hamilton in March of 1909, before merging with the Co-operative College of Canada in 1987 to form the Canadian Co-operative Association. The CCA's one-hundredth anniversary activities include an exhibit at Library and Archives Canada and a strategy to encourage youth involvement in co-ops.

4 Canadians out of ten who are a member of at least one co-op.

8,800 The number of co-operatives and credit unions across Canada.

155, 000 Canadians employed by co-operatives and credit unions.

30 billion Dollars in business generated by Canadian non-financial co-ops each year.

2 The number of times more likely a co-operative enterprise is to survive after five years, compared to an investor-owned business.

70 Percentage of Quebec's population belonging to at least one co-op.

2,100 The number of Canadian non-profit housing co-ops, which together are home to more than 250,000 people.

For Canadian history news updated weekly, read the News Splash! at TheBeaver.ca .

Christopher Moore

Oil history's black hole

Alberta's oil riches transformed Canada. So why aren't historians interested?

If you went across the border in mid-2008, your handsome loonies were as good as those homely greenbacks. And *Maclean's* made a cover story out of the arrival of $200-per-barrel oil.

That was then. Now the Canadian dollar has fallen to eighty cents. And oil is below $50 a barrel. We begin to realize: Our loonie floats on oil.

Oil is huge. It's huge for Alberta, where last year's forecast surplus of $8 billion is this year's forecast deficit of $4 billion. And it is huge for all of Canada. Alberta's energy industries are doing as much to shape Canada's modern history as anything you can name.

So Alberta's oil is a story we need to know, and we need to know it historically. Recently I've been wondering: If I wanted to read myself into the history of oil and Alberta, what would I find?

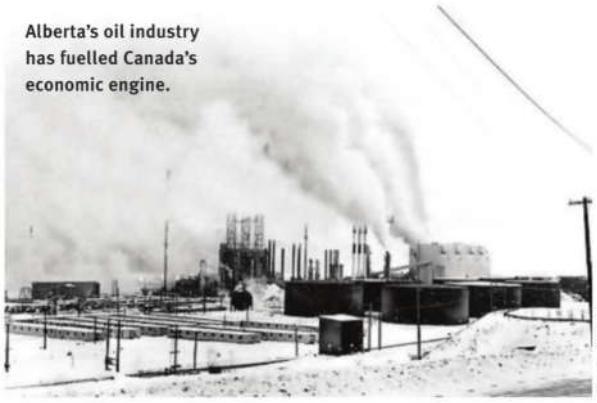
Shelves of economic and political and business stories of oil, no problem. Environmental issues, sure. But what about a big history pulling the story together? American writer Bryan Burroughs has just released *The Big Rich*, about how Texas got that way. Who could do that for Calgary?

I looked at Aritha van Herk's lively *Mavericks: An Incorrigible History of* Alber*ta*. It's full of lore and stories — but there's more on the Mounties than on oil. Not her fault — that's what her story sources offer. But surely there are oil stories worth the telling.

I called a petroleum historian, David Finch of Calgary. Finch works steadily on petroleum history; his recent book *Pumped: Everyone's Guide to the Oil Patch* is a not-so-dummies' guide to the industry. Finch thinks things are better than I feared. "The old-timers are writing their memoirs, or having them written — I'm working on a couple myself," he tells me. "They think, well, maybe my kids are not terribly interested, but they know they were a part of something important.

"We actually have great resources," he goes on. "It is still a living story, and people do not think of it as history. But when they do, the materials will be terrific." He sends me to archivist Doug Cass at Calgary's marvellous Glenbow Museum, the memory bank of the West.

For years, Cass has been acquiring petroleum industry papers for the Glenbow; a recent arrival, filling 630 metres of shelving, was Imperial Oil's corporate records. "I am constantly amazed by the materials I am finding about oil and the industry," he says. "But it is not done by historians, I would say. Very few are the work of professional historians."



Alberta's oil industry has fuelled Canada's economic engine.

CANADIAN PRESS

Indeed, drilling for academic scholarship on Alberta's energy history does not seem rewarding. The University of British Columbia's David Breen, now retired, wrote several studies, including an essay pointedly titled "1947: The Year that Made Alberta," (that is, the year of the Leduc discovery). One might think the Alberta history departments would have any number of endowed chairs in petroleum history. But the historical file seems to depend more on Calgary's Petroleum History Society, a lively ad-hoc group.

Nothing could be more useful than clear-eyed historical scrutiny of the political history of energy in the last sixty years.

Economist Herb Emery, in the same essay collection as Breen's piece, suggests that after Peter Lougheed's province-building moment, Alberta's leaders "lost faith" in activist, government-driven policy. Emery argues that Ralph Klein went back to "Ernest Manning's world," where the province simply spends whatever oil will provide, booming when prices rise, facing the loss of $12 billion in a year when the bust comes.

That need for historical perspective is getting more critical all the time.

Andrew Nikiforuk's recent *Tar Sands: Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent* is a tough, sharp critique of the devastation — political as much as ecological — he sees in the developments now transforming the oil patch. He can see the need for historical work, and not just for all the great stories the industry offers.

"With the tar sands," he says, "we are in new territory. The scale of investment and exports is a game changer. We have moved up from the world's No. 7 producer to No. 5, and we could become No. 2. You cannot be the No. 1 oil supplier to the No. 1 empire without having it change you.

"But in Canada nobody knows a damn thing about the tar sands. There is great space for historical reflection."

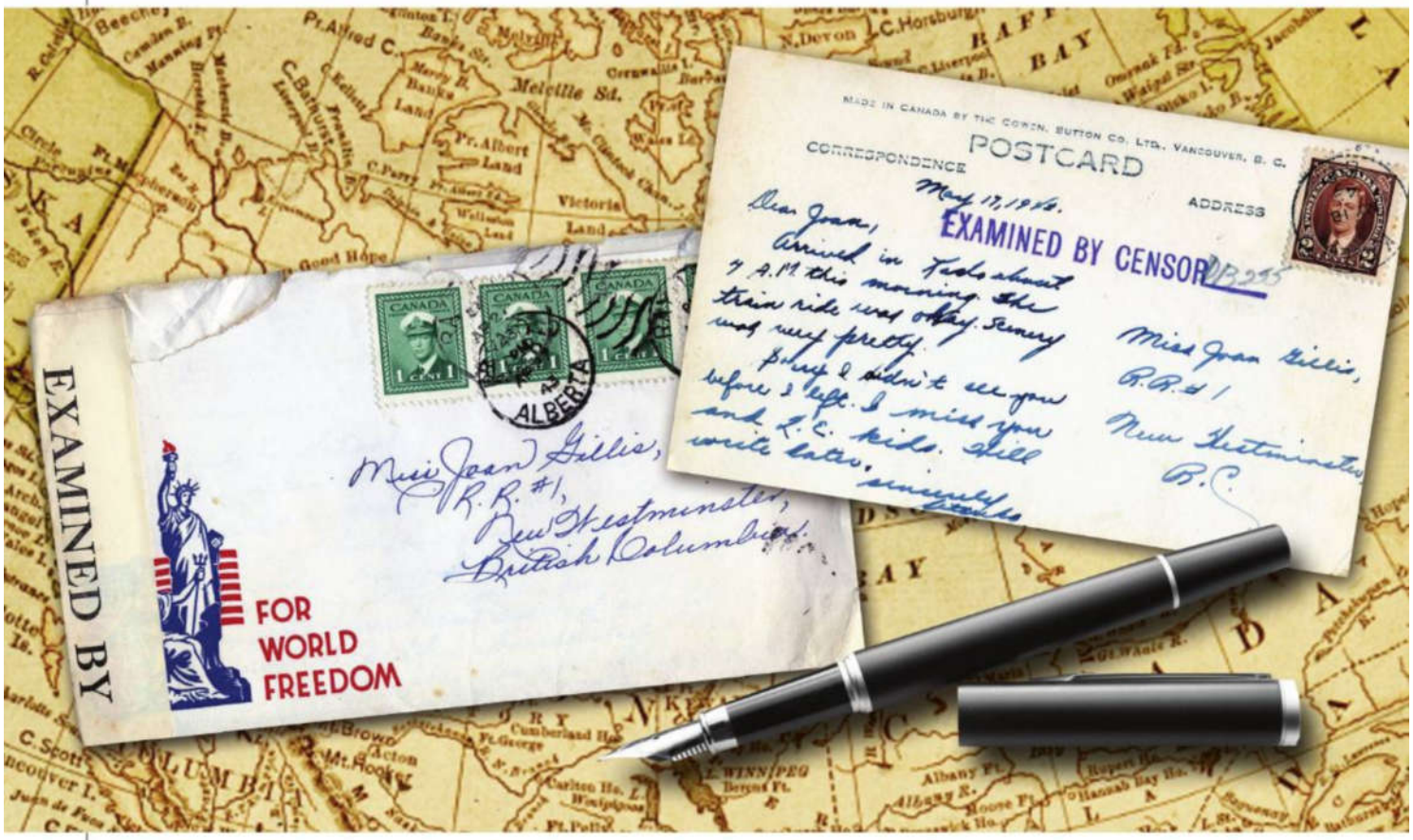
David Breen's and Herb Emery's essays are in the 2005 Alberta centennial volume *Alberta Formed — Alberta Transformed*, edited by Michael Payne, Donald Wetherell, and Catherine Cavanaugh (University of Calgary Press 2006).

Christopher Moore comments in every issue of *The Beaver*.

Your Story

A legacy in letters

Joan Gillis and her Japanese Canadian schoolmates were separated during the Second World War — but their friendship endured, writes Steve Turnbull.



Joan Gillis received lessons on geography, politics, and human nature that were much more profound than anyone might expect under normal circumstances. These were not, however, normal circumstances.

When Joan entered Grade 8 in September 1940, Canada had been at war with Germany for a year and would soon be at war with Japan. It was from this latter event that Joan learned the geography and politics of racism.

Through a collection of letters written to my cousin Joan from her school friends, I learned of Japanese Canadians who were caught up in one of the largest expulsions in Canadian history. Joan saw them uprooted from school and sent away by a Canadian government that branded all Japanese Canadians as enemy aliens and security threats. For more than sixty years, Joan has saved these letters, gaining a greater understanding of their significance with each passing year.

Joan has lived most of her life in Surrey, British Columbia. We are among the many descendants of the Gillis family of Surrey. My great-grandparents, John and Sammie Anne Gillis, settled on the banks of the Fraser River in the 1880s. Their eight children included my maternal grandmother Annie, and her younger brother Warren, Joan's father.

The northern part of Surrey was also home to a significant population of Japanese Canadians. In the early twentieth century they established poultry farms, cultivated fields of strawberries and other produce, and fished the Fraser River. It was here that Joan met and became friends with many of their children, first at South Westminster Elementary School, and later at Queen Elizabeth High School.

Joan and her friends were soon overtaken by momentous world events. When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the Canadian government imposed a series of increasingly severe restrictions on people of Japanese ancestry living in Canada. These culminated in a February 1942 order that all such persons should

STEVE TURNBULL/MONTAGE MICHEL GROLEAU

be removed from a one-hundred-mile-wide security zone along the B.C. coast. By May of that year, most of Joan's Japanese companions were gone; many went to work with their families on sugar beet farms in Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario. Often, the families were separated, with the children's fathers sent off to work on road gangs.

The 150 letters and notes, all in their original envelopes, are now yellowing and frail. Many of the envelopes are stamped "Examined by Censor."

Most of the letters are tinged with a curious mixture of excitement from children seeing and experiencing new things, as well as sadness fuelled by homesickness and confusion.

Sumi Mototsune, one of Joan's best friends, wrote in April 1942 from Raymond, Alberta, "the trip was wonderful," but tempered that news with, "gee, but I miss you a lot." She also noted some of the harsh realities — their crowded one-room house and the long walks necessary to get drinking water. She closed with what was probably the hope of all these children: "As soon as this trouble is settled, I'll come home right away."

This theme surfaced again and again. It would be seven years before any of the expelled Japanese Canadians were allowed to return to the coast. Unfortunately, most of these children never did go home. Instead, their land was confiscated and they were scattered across Canada, like Joan's friend Sumi, who died in Burlington, Ontario, in 1999.

In bringing the letters to me four years ago, Joan was driven by a sense of their importance and the need to ensure their preservation. However, I sensed that her motivation ran deeper than that.

Perhaps, like many Canadians of the Second World War generation, Joan feels a sense of personal responsibility for the mass evacuation that swept up her friends. One afternoon, she confided, "even though I was only fourteen, I can't help feeling that there was something I could have done to stop it."

As a result of word-of-mouth altruism, we have accounted for most of Joan's one dozen correspondents. These young people relied on their letters to Joan to provide them with a tenuous grip on home.

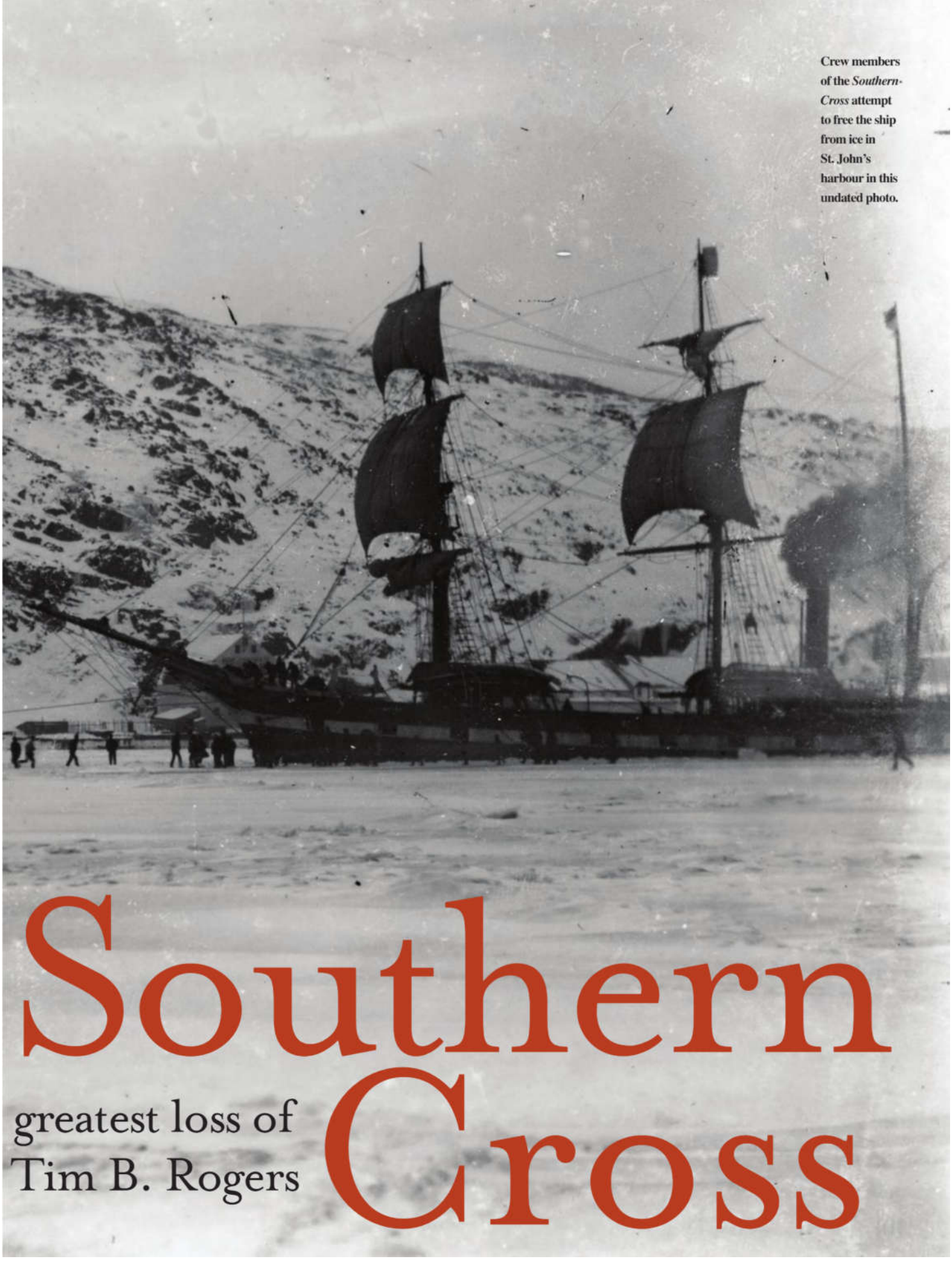
In turn, they provide us with a powerful sense of the turmoil experienced by children torn from their homes. They are a strong, emotional connection to a sad period in Canadian history — a legacy in letters.

Steve Turnbull is a secondary school teacher in the Vancouver area. As a former museum curator and fourth-generation British Columbian, he has long been interested in the province's history. Turnbull has written on a variety of historical topics for several B.C. publications. He may be reached at turnbull_s@sd36.bc.ca.

The Sinking OF THE

The sinking of the Southern Cross led to the life in Newfoundland's sealing history. by

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND



Crew members of the *Southern Cross* attempt to free the ship from ice in St. John's harbour in this undated photo.

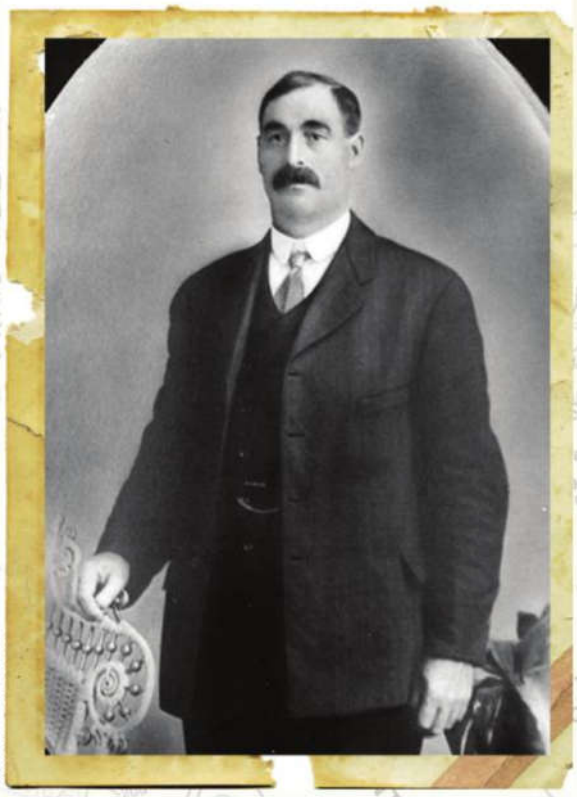
Southern Cross

greatest loss of

Tim B. Rogers

George Clarke was an ambitious man. The veteran seaman from Brigus, Newfoundland, had clawed his way up the ranks to earn his first captaincy — of the wooden sealing ship SS *Bloodhound* — in 1912. The following year he was given the famed SS *Southern Cross* — a ship that fifteen years earlier had made history in the Antarctic. Clarke and his crew of 172 men returned from the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1913 with a good harvest of over 16,000 harp seal pelts, a cargo valued at $31,000 (about $670,000 today).

It seemed Clarke was a success, but when sealing season came around again in 1914, the captain of the *Southern Cross* found himself under immense pressure. The *'Cross* — built as a whaler in Norway in 1886 and the first ship to cross the Great Ice Barrier to the Antarctic's Ross Sea — was having trouble recruiting seasoned sealers. Many believed the old ship was no longer fit to challenge the ice; moreover, some avoided Clarke because a portion of the wages of the previous year's crew had been held back due to a lawsuit. Clarke thus had to accept a much younger and less experienced crew than did the other captains.



Captain George Clarke

PROVIDED BY GRAHAM SKANES

Nonetheless, he pushed ahead. On the morning of March 5, 1914, the *'Cross* was ready to strike out: supplies were stowed; coal was loaded; ropes, which ran every which way between the ship's three masts and bowsprit, were made taut; wisps of black smoke curled up from her yellow funnel.

Clarke must have felt apprehension, though, because, in an unusual move, he spent his last nights in port on board the *Southern Cross*, rather than joining the other officers at the Crosbie Hotel in St. John's, as was the custom. Perhaps he was wondering how he was going to earn enough money to build the big captain's house he had promised his wife Lucy back in Brigus (a captain's pay was tied to the number of seals harvested). Maybe he fretted about repaying the kindness of the ship's owner, Walter Baine Grieve, who had stood by him despite a lawsuit in which Clarke had been accused of stealing six thousand of the *Neptune*'s pelts off the ice in 1913. (The suit was eventually settled out of court.)

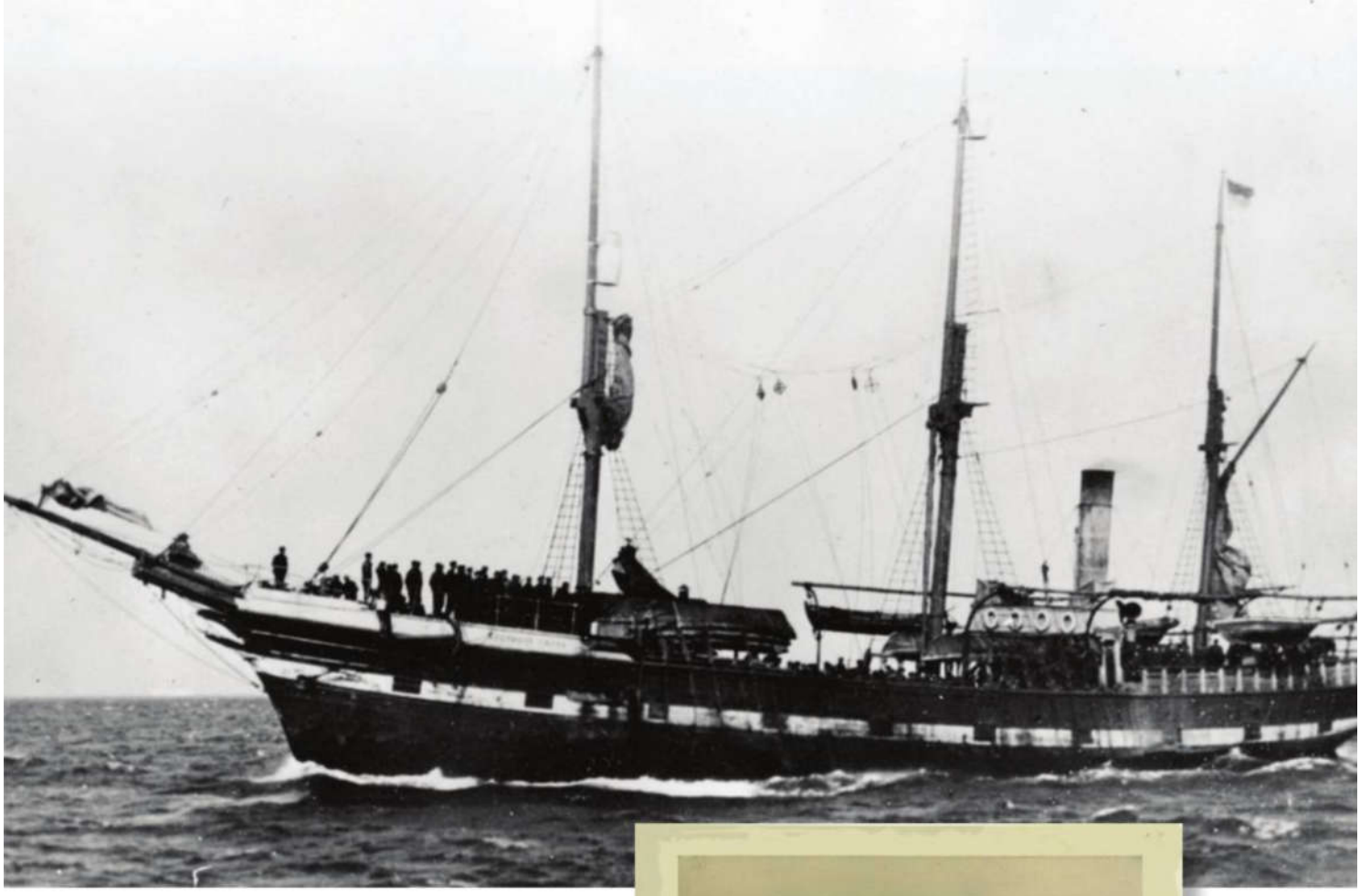
Perhaps he simply wished to avoid being bested, yet again, by the other captains. He yearned to be spoken of in the same breath as Abram Keane and Bob Bartlett — top captains of the day. He craved the silk flag, which a captain won for being the first sealer home.

On the afternoon of March 5, Walter Baine Grieve stood in his sumptuous office watching the *Southern Cross* pull out of the quay in St. John's harbour. She was about to navigate the stream of open water that snaked through the grey ice out to the Narrows. He watched with a mix of pride and concern as the greenish-white wash of her propellers swelled astern and she began to chug ahead.

Grieve's pride came from the recognition that his firm, Baine, Johnston and Company, had become a major player in the seal hunt. He had managed the firm to unprecedented success during his tenure. And he was a careful owner. The *Southern Cross* in particular had received a lot of attention in the way of repairs and improvements — $20,000 worth from 1902 to 1914. Before the 1914 seal hunt, she had been inspected by the insurer Lloyd's and found to be "perfectly equipped for the seal fishery."

Yet concerns must have weighed on Grieve's mind as the sealers departed. A long line of tragic losses had dogged his firm, the most recent of which had been the sinking of the *Erna* with thirty-six souls on board in 1912.

Looking at the *Southern Cross*, Grieve could see how decrepit the old wooden ship looked. It seemed barely seaworthy compared to the newer, steel-hulled



The *Southern Cross* was built as a whaling ship in 1886.

steamers like the *Stephano* and the *Nascopie*.

Grieve must have prayed that all would go well, as he watched the aged three-master disappear into the dusk, sounding farewell with a solitary moan of her whistle.

Twenty-one ships in total headed out on the 1914 hunt. Fifteen — including the newer and more robust steel-hulled ships — went to the Front, off the north-east coast. Six ships, including the *Southern Cross*, headed to the Gulf of St. Lawrence to hunt the portion of the harp seal herd that slipped through the Strait of Belle Isle on its migration southward. The latter ships were the dregs of the fleet — old wooden steamers converted from previous careers as whalers, fishing supply ships, and explorers. They got a week's head start in the hunt, for sealing season opened earlier in the Gulf.

NEWFOUNDLAND PUBLIC ARCHIVES

Ship owner Walter Baine Grieve.

When the bulk of the fleet — the big steel ships — left for the Front, Signal Hill, overlooking St. John's harbour, was covered with flag-waving spectators. The people of St. John's followed the exploits of the sealers the way hockey fans follow the NHL today. They tracked the progress of the ships by reading daily newspaper reports, debated the wireless messages posted at the telegraph office, and, of course, added their own smattering of speculation. Money was wagered on the favourites. Who would win the coveted silk flag? Which ship would be the highliner and bring home the greatest number of pelts? Talk of sealing crackled in taverns, around kitchen tables, and in clubs all across town.

As the ships made their way to the sealing grounds,

the newspapers in St. John's were full of daily reports that read like the broadcast of a horse race. On Monday, March 16, reports of seal sightings were discouraging: "Few seals being seen." But that changed by Friday, March 20, when headlines were reading, "In the fat." Impressive seal kill numbers were reported in the days that followed.

Buried among the many success stories was a line about the *Southern Cross* — on March 26 she was deep in the water, meaning she was weighed down with her cargo of about 17,000 pelts.

But there was one ominous development that the papers did not report — the birth of several major weather systems. A huge high-pressure area, centred in Bermuda, was pressing down over half of the western Atlantic. Its counter-clockwise motion spun warm, humid air northward, pampering the sealers with unseasonable, spring-like temperatures. A second high was amassing in the west, over Manitoba, driving dry, cold air outwards. Between these two converging highs, a deep low-pressure system began to grow, a vortex of warm air that was saturated with moisture. It slowly contracted into a rotating funnel and began to creep eastward. A gigantic storm was on its way.

BÉATRICE FAVEREAU

On Sunday, March 29, a beautiful spring day, the *'Cross* departed the ice with a full load. The next day a cable from Port-aux-Basques reported: "Gulf steamer passed Channel at 6:30 last evening. Apparently well fished — steamer supposed to be *Southern Cross* or *Terra Nova*, but too far off to identify." A message received from St. Pierre the next day confirmed the *'Cross*'s passage: "A three masted black painted steamer with yellow funnel going south-east just passing now."

Excitement must have grown in St. John's as people began to realize that the *Southern Cross*, a dark horse, might win the race home. The ambitious Captain Clarke, his ship loaded with valuable pelts, would have been in his glory, almost within reach of the greatest victory of his sealing career.

Then, on March 30, the barometer began to fall. The fine spring weather gave way as clouds gathered, temperatures dropped, and the wind picked up speed. Soon, the twenty-eight-year-old ship was straining toward home in the face of blinding snow and gale-force winds.

"The weather conditions on that day became very bad," ship owner Grieve said later during an inquiry into the sinking. "It blew with unprecedented force from the southeast accompanied by heavy snow drift or blizzard."

By noon, St. John's was at a standstill. Trains were cancelled, telegraph lines were down. It was described as the worst storm of an already stormy season, and probably one of the worst felt in the city for many years.

As the blizzard reached its zenith, the following message was received: "Messrs. Bowring Brothers received a wire from Captain Connors of the *Portia* that the SS *Southern Cross* was 5 miles West South West of Cape Pine this morning at 11 o'clock." In reporting this, the *Evening Telegram* noted, "It is supposed that she ran into St. Mary's Bay and harboured at North Habour."

Several days later, as the weather cleared and people in the city dug themselves out of the storm, the *'Cross* still had not not arrived in St. John's. Concern about her fate, however, was overshadowed by another terrible event, news of which reached St. John's on the evening of April 2. The reports were so horrifying that no one any longer paid attention to who was winning the great race.

On April 4, the SS *Bellaventure* steamed into St. John's harbour carrying a grim cargo. Bodies, still frozen fast and caked in ice, were stacked on deck. In all seventy-eight sealers from the SS *Newfoundland* died after being trapped on the ice for two days and two nights during a howling blizzard.

In the shadow of this spectacular tragedy, the

MARITIME ARCHIVE, MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND

The *Southern Cross* at wharf in Labrador.

announcement that the SS *Kyle* and two other ships had been dispatched to search for the *Southern Cross*, now missing for several days, gravitated to the back pages. So too did the persistent announcements that the "*Southern Cross* is still unreported."

Hope that the *'Cross* had sheltered up in St. Mary's Bay was soon dashed. A few false sightings of other ships thought to be the *'Cross* were followed by the conjecture that she had been blown out to sea and was beating her way back home. The *Evening Telegram* printed reassuring recollections that she had been blown off course before, and had survived. But concern for the *Southern Cross* continued to grow.

On April 4, four days after the storm, a complete list of the sealers and crew of the *'Cross* was printed in the newspapers. Then sealing ships began to return from the Gulf, compounding worries about the old wooden vessel. So too did the regular disappointing reports from the search vessel *Kyle*.

Almost as an afterthought amidst the stories of the *Newfoundland* disaster, the April 7 *Evening Telegram* noted: "No tidings of the *Southern Cross*. Her absence is causing grave anxiety." Two days later it was reported that "relatives are beginning to feel despondent" and that "few people have any belief that she is still afloat."

It became clear that Newfoundland had suffered not one, but two, of the greatest disasters in its history.

Indeed, the *Southern Cross* had foundered during that terrible storm. One hundred

Then the barometer began to fall. Blinding snow, whipped by gale-force winds, met the old sealer as she strained toward home.

and seventy-three men, the flower of Newfoundland youth, went to their deaths.

Stories of women seeing fetches of their men, mute visions visiting on the night of the storm, began to spread. The SS *Bloodhound* reported wreckage near Cape Race but it was never positively identified. With no solid news of her fate, rumours of flotsam being found as far away as Ireland rushed in to fill the void. By the time an inquiry was held later that year, no confirmed evidence speaking to the fate of the *Southern Cross* could be tendered. The best they could do was call it an "act of God."

Many have speculated about how it happened. Clearly, Clarke chose to challenge the storm. Likely driven by his ambition and desire to please his family, as well as Walter Baine Grieve, he must have decided to forge ahead. Perhaps by the time he realized how bad things were, it was too late. Then the limitations of his old ship came into play. Engines had been mounted low because of her rounded shape as a Norwegian-built whaler. This made her bilges small. With her pumps reputed to be poor, she couldn't expel the deck wash infiltrating her hatch covers.

"She had a very high poop and very high bulwarks, so that if she shipped a large quantity of water, she might have foundered before freeing herself of the water," Grieve told the marine inquiry into her sinking.

Captain George Clarke's older brother, John Clarke, who had also captained the *Southern Cross*, told the inquiry she was "cranky" and tended to go over on her side when loaded.

Certainly the bumper harvest of seal pelts must have weighed her down. Her pumps would soon have been overwhelmed. Water would have risen below decks, dousing the engines. The *Southern Cross* was likely swept broadside to the swell. Within minutes she would have disappeared, with all hands lost. And the North Atlantic would have surged on as if nothing had happened.

Tim B. Rogers is the author of a forthcoming historical fiction novel about the *Southern Cross*. He is also a professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Calgary.

Et Cetera

The Ice Hunters: A History of Newfoundland Sealing to 1914 by Shannon Ryan. Breakwater, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, 1994.

Death on the Ice by Cassie Brown. Doubleday Canada, Toronto, 1972.

The story of the *Southern Cross* was preserved in a traditional ballad. To learn more, go to TheBeaver.ca.

Disaster

Although the sinking of the SS *Southern Cross* in 1914 resulted in the greatest single loss of life in the Newfoundland's sealing history, the event was overshadowed by another terrible East Coast tragedy that occurred at almost the same time: A crew of sealers became caught in a blizzard and spent two days and nights stranded on North Atlantic ice floes. The majority froze to death, or drowned.

It happened at the seal-hunting grounds off the northeast coast of Newfoundland, an area known as the Front. On March 30, the SS *Newfoundland*, an old wooden steamer, became stuck in the ice and its captain, Westbury Kean, sent his crew to a seal herd about ten kilometres out in mild spring weather. They were instructed to spend the night aboard his father's ship, the powerful steel-hulled *Stephano*, which was nearby.

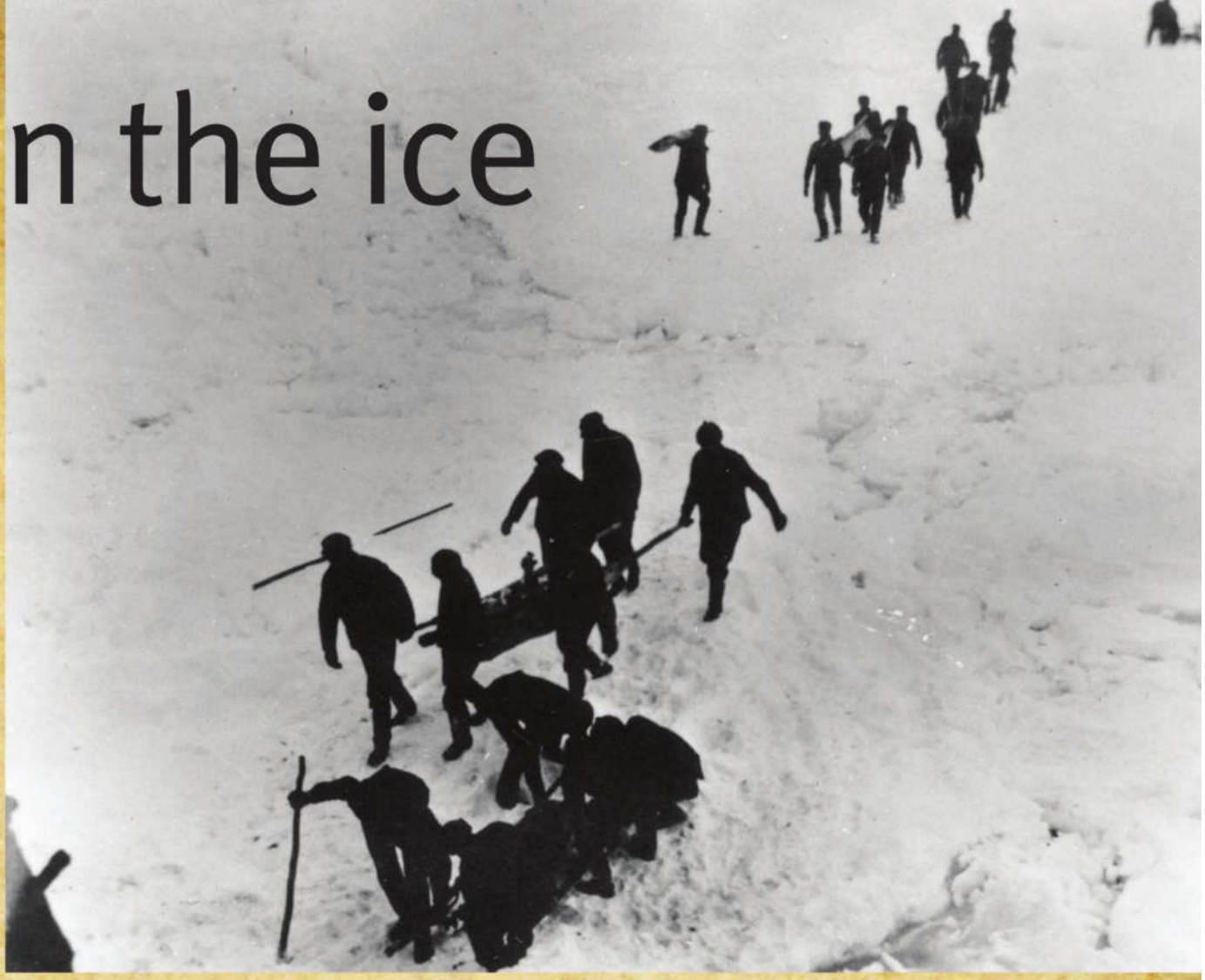
But the captain of the *Stephano*, Abram Kean, sent the 132 men back to the ice after a short break. The *Stephano* steamed away to pick up its own crew and the *Newfoundland* sealers were left on their own as a powerful winter storm gathered force.

Driving winds sent sleet and blinding snow. The men, who carried little food and no shelter, were poorly clothed for blizzard conditions. They started walking back to the *Newfoundland* through knee-deep snowdrifts and across wheeling ice pans. As darkness fell, they built shelters with loose chunks of ice but these provided little comfort in shifting winds, ice storms, and dropping temperatures. Many died before morning; others struggled to walk with frozen limbs.

For the next day and night, men struggled to reach the *Newfoundland*, whose young captain was without

A survivor of the SS *Newfoundland* disaster is taken ashore in St. John's.

on the ice



MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

A search party carries bodies from the ice following the SS *Newfoundland* disaster.

a wireless radio and believed his crew was safe on the *Stephano*. Some men became delirious, walked into the water, and drowned. Others crawled and staggered on. A total of seventy-eight men died. Of the survivors, many were maimed for life, having lost limbs to frostbite.

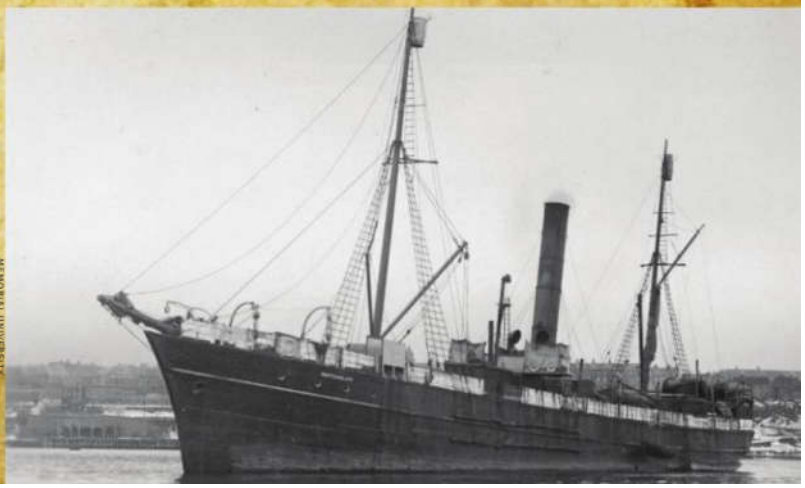
The rescue ship SS *Bellaventure* returned to port with the shocking sight of frozen bodies stacked on deck like cordwood. "The vision sent a shudder through the crowd," wrote a reporter with the *Evening Telegram*. "The bodies had been laid there just as they were brought in from the ice, many of them with limbs contracted and drawn up in postures which the cold had brought about."

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

The saddest sight was that of a father and son, frozen in each other's arms. Veteran sealer Reuben Crewe, forty-nine, had had narrow escapes before and had not wanted to return to the ice, but his sixteen-year-old son Albert was determined to go. So Reuben had gone along to keep the boy safe. The man had sheltered his son with his body to the end.

The twin tragedies of the lost sealers of the *Newfoundland* and the sinking of the *Southern Cross* resulted in a combined death total of 251 (some reports say 252, due to a discrepancy in the number believed on board the *Southern Cross*). The deaths almost wiped out communities like Brigus, where many of the sealers were from.

Collectively, these events are known as the Newfoundland Sealing Disaster, and they led to demands for changes to the industry. The Newfoundland government passed new laws a few years later that included making radios and flares mandatory on all sealing vessels, making it illegal to overload a vessel, and requiring ship owners to pay compensation for dead or injured sealers.



MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

The SS *Newfoundland*.

PETER KINDLESBACHER

Steamer into Oblivion

Questions still remain about the fate of those aboard a doomed West Coast steamer. Were they massacred? If so, who did it? by Rick James

Weeks after the remains of a ship washed up on beaches near Cape Caution northeast of Vancouver Island in 1873, disturbing stories began to circulate in U.S. newspapers. Survivors from the missing American steamer *Geo. S. Wright* had been massacred by a fierce tribe of Canadian Indians, went the rumours. Worse, some of the female passengers had been captured and were being held as slaves, according to the wildly speculative reports. So much controversy arose in the newspapers of the day that the shipwreck soon took on the stature of an international incident.

But did any of this really happen? Even today, there is little certainty about what took place. This much, however, is known:

At the time of the tragedy, the *Geo. S. Wright* was operating under the flag of the Oregon Steamship Company and was on a return voyage to Portland after transporting mail, troops, and supplies to Alaska. Twenty-one officers and crew, along with about a dozen passengers, were aboard when the *Wright*, a schooner-rigged steamer, disappeared in late January 1873.

It was probably around January 27 when Captain Thomas Ainsley made the fatal decision to put to sea into a raging snowstorm after his final stop at a salmon saltery at Kluvok, Alaska. He was evidently in some haste. He had a wedding to go to — his own — and he was probably anxious not to miss it.

It was not a wise move. The ship was in very poor condition — the company she belonged to was notorious for losing its vessels, which were very badly maintained and manned by poorly trained crews. Earlier in the voyage, the chief engineer had complained of his incompetent assistant and had wanted to beach the ship in Nanaimo to repair a discharge pipe, but it was never done. While in Kluvok, she had taken on a particularly heavy load of eight hundred barrels of salmon and one hundred barrels of fish oil.

Thus, the leaky, heavily laden *Geo. S. Wright* steamed out of Kluvok harbour and into a storm — and that was the last anyone saw of her.

Right: a *New York Times* story about the wreck of the *Geo. S. Wright*.

The Wreck of the Steamer Geo. S. Wright.

SAN FRANCISCO, March 4.—A dispatch received last night from Portland, Oregon, gives the following names of the officers and crew of the steamer Geo. S. Wright, which was wrecked near Cape Caution, between Sitka and Victoria: Thomas J. Ainsley, captain; B. F. Weisler, purser; John Sutton, chief engineer; James Miner, second engineer; Daniel Noonan, first mate; Wm. Price, second mate: P. Clowson and Owen McGough, firemen; Edward Johnson, A. Dunn, James Irwin, Gus. Proffe, and J. Jensen, seamen; Chris. Adamnie, steward; Pedro Selvo, cook; C. Hevendehl, waiter; Moses Baptiste, pantry man; an Indian mess-boy, and two Indian coal passers.

The United States steamer Lincoln left Port Townsend on Saturday for the scene of the wreck, to ascertain if any of the passengers or crew could be found. The steamer Gussie Telfair is expected back from Sitka the latter part of this week. It is known that Major Walker and wife were on board the steamer.

NEW YORK TIMES

Below: the HMS *Peterel*, one of the ships that searched for the *Wright*.

It wasn't until a month later that word reached southern ports about what became of the overdue ship.

In a headline story featured in the February 28 *Victoria British Colonist*, titled "Terrible Marine Disaster," it was reported that a large amount of wreckage was found washed up on a beach at Queen Charlotte Sound near Cape Caution, located on the mainland across from the northern tip of Vancouver Island. The newspaper said two canoes of Bella Bella (known today as Heiltsuk) natives had arrived in Victoria the day before and related what they had discovered: part of a mast, a poop deck, and pilothouse; a woman's chignon (hairpiece); and "a plank tied to a box as if some unfortunate on board a sinking vessel tried to make a raft."

Since there wasn't a U.S. government vessel in good seaworthy condition available at the time, the American consul in Victoria pressured local Canadian authorities to dispatch a Royal Navy warship to the area. Under intense pressure from friends and families of lost loved ones, the *Wright*'s owners in Portland ordered her sister ship, the *Gussie Telfair*, to head north on a search mission.

The HMS *Peterel*, a Royal Navy steam sloop, attempted to search every small island and cove capable of harbouring survivors. But it was unable to land a search party anywhere near Cape Caution. Commander Cecil George Sloane Stanley described it as impossible, since the waters off the cape were "a perfect pyramid of surf and waves."

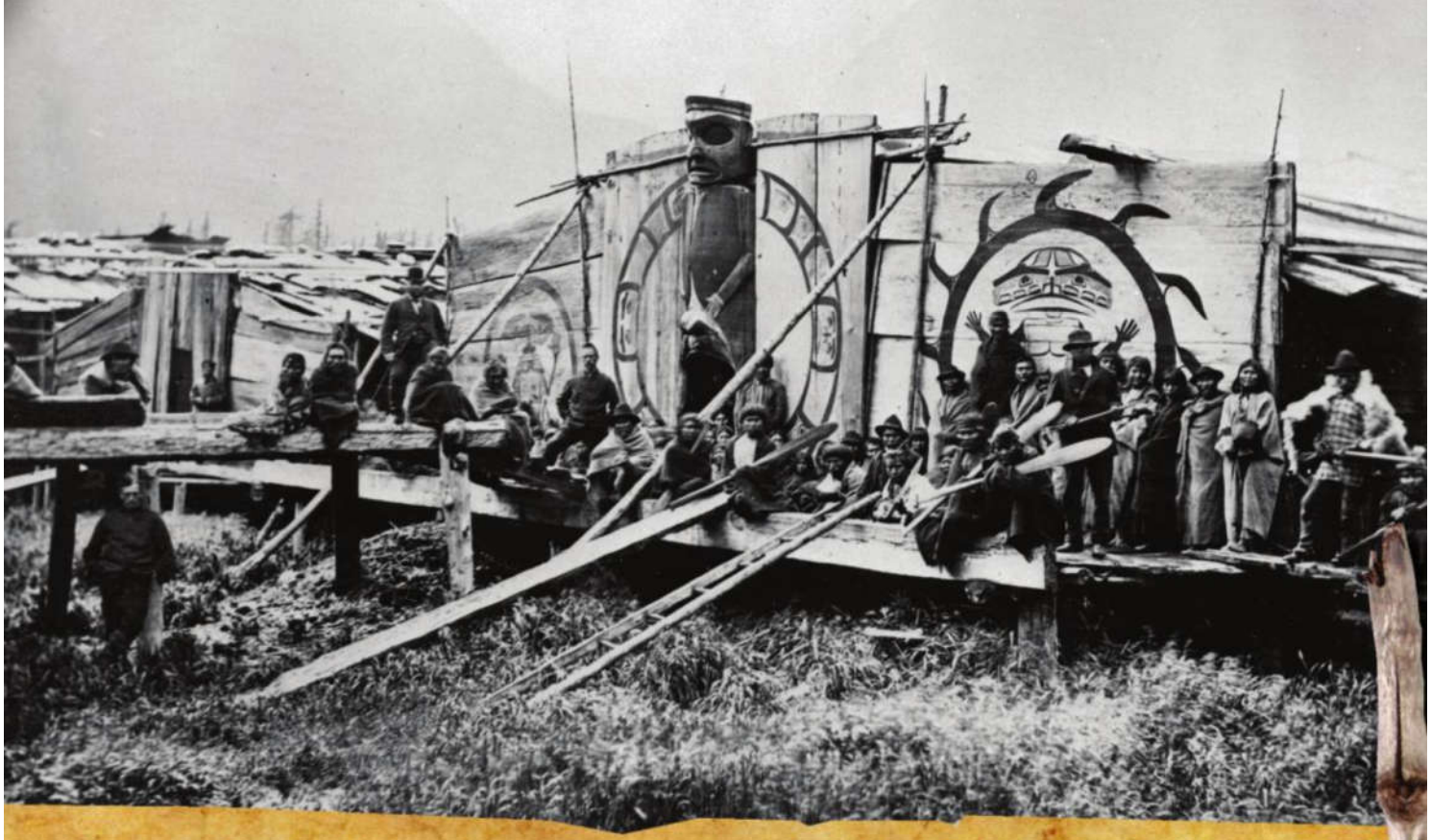
The *Gussie Telfair*'s search took it all the way to Alaska and back. The crew of the steamer recovered pieces of wreckage from natives and local traders along the Central Coast, but were unable to find anyone having any direct knowledge of the shipwreck. Both ships returned to Victoria in mid-March bearing the news that neither a shipwreck nor any survivors from the *Geo. S. Wright* were to be found.

By late March, anxiety over lost friends and family members soon led to hysteria as strange stories began to circulate across the border. One writer to the *Olympia Courier* in Washington Territory, who used the pen name Suwanee, claimed that he had heard that two men and a woman who managed to make it to shore were seized by local natives. The men were eaten, said Suwanee, while "the woman [was] kept for vile purposes." The writer went on to blame it all on the British, saying that these horrific deeds were a direct result of "the teachings and advice of the British authorities who taught natives to abhor Boston Men." (Boston Men was a term used for Americans; the British were known as King George's Men.)

Those living north of the forty-ninth parallel understandably took offence.

The editor of the *British Colonist* suggested the attack was unfair, given that a British ship had lost no time searching for survivors lost off the American vessel: "We really think that the alacrity with which the Canadian government sent a British warship in the vicinity of the wreck, and the zeal with which the officers of the ship prosecuted their search, should have protected our people from the publica-

BC MUSEUM ARCHIVES



The people could only watch as their homes and possessions were destroyed. They suffered through two terrible winters in their ruined village before giving up and finally deciding to move on.

tion of charges which only a vile mind could conceive."

It wouldn't be until early August of 1873 that an American government vessel, the USRC *Lincoln*, finally arrived on the scene in Queen Charlotte Sound. Since the lifeboats from the *Geo. S. Wright* were yet to be found (in the end, they never were) it was speculated that survivors might be living on the beach somewhere along the coast. After an intensive search throughout Queen Charlotte and Millbank Sounds, some skins and a copper plate from the *Wright*'s gangway were obtained from Bella Coola (Nuxalk) natives.

"These Indians were found to be peaceable and quiet, and according to agents of the Hudson's Bay Company living among them ... all stories of foul play are utterly without foundation," said Commander H.B. Davis. He stressed that a thorough search was conducted for the cutter's crew and officers. But more importantly, he was convinced "that the horrible stories told are the inventions of unprincipled white men."

Four years passed with little new information, and the incident seemed destined to fade from memory. But in early 1877, Alfred Dudower, master of the sloop *Ringleader* and a high-ranking Tsimshian, met a Bella Bella chief named Charley Hemsett in Nanaimo who told him an incredible tale that set a new search in motion.

Hemsett said he had met a native named Billy Coma who claimed to be a survivor of the wreck. According to Coma, after the ship was swamped by mountainous seas, fifteen survivors struggled ashore onto two small islands near Cape Caution. That night their fires attracted some canoes of the Oweekeno, whose occupants landed and set upon the hapless group, robbing them and slitting their throats. Coma, a Nimpkish, (a Namgis native, one of the many Kwakwaka'wakw Nations) claimed that an Oweekeno blood connection saved him from certain death.

When this startling revelation was brought before the authorities, the gun vessel HMS *Rocket* was quickly ordered

Above: People in the village of Kimsquit in 1881, four years after it was levelled by the British navy.

north from Esquimalt. Also aboard the warship were Sergeant Bloomfield of the Victoria police, representing the civil authority, Alfred Dudower, and George Hunt, an interpreter. Once in Central Coast waters, landing parties were sent ashore at various villages to perform interrogations where scraps of information were obtained from various First Nations. On March 30, the ship finally arrived off the Nuxalk village of Kimsquit, located in Dean Channel. Here, a series of events led to a terrible outcome for the village.

BC MUSEUM ARCHIVES

The crew of the HMS *Rocket* in 1877. Sergeant Bloomfield leans on a rail, while Lieut. Harris sits on a chair in front.

The *Rocket*'s commander, Lieutenant Charles Reynold Harris, sent Bloomfield ashore with a small party to demand that the Kimsquit chiefs hand over four individuals implicated in the alleged massacre. Only two suspects were delivered up. Harris warned that the village would be destroyed if the other two were not brought to the ship. When the pair did not show up, Harris put the ship into a position where the *Rocket*'s guns could be fired on the village. Harris ordered the villagers to stand clear. He then shelled the abandoned settlement. The people could only watch as their homes and possessions were destroyed. They suffered through two terrible winters in their ruined village before giving up and finally deciding to move on.

"The settlement, which had probably numbered one hundred or more before the shelling, was uninhabitable and was abandoned, and its population dispersed to other settlements," maritime historian Barry Gough wrote in *Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846–1890*. Gough described the incident as "one of the last cases of sanctioned use of violence by the Royal Navy against Northwest Coast Indians."

Four native people — two Oweekeno and two Nuxalk from the village of Kimsquit — ended up being arrested, taken to Victoria, and charged. But later that year, when the matter came up in court, it became clear that a grave mistake had been made.

The *British Colonist* reported on October 20, 1877, that the Crown's star witness, Billy Coma, had spent a long time in the Victoria jail and was not reliable: "[Coma is] so bad a character that it is almost impossible to believe him." The police superintendent told the judge that the attorney general had done all he possibly could, but was still unable to come up with any evidence at all to corroborate Coma's statements. Consequently, all charges were dropped and the prisoners were discharged from custody.

Today, the actual details of the loss of the *Geo. S. Wright*, including the location of the wreck site and who was behind the massacre of survivors — if there indeed was one — remain shrouded in mystery.

As noted in *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest*, "All that can be said is that she sailed away and no message ever came to quiet the heartaches of those whose friends and relatives perished with her."

Rick James is the author of *The Ghost Ships of Royston* (2004). He is also a researcher and writer with the Underwater Archaeological Society of B.C. The society is conducting a search for the wreck of the *Geo. S. Wright* this summer.

Et Cetera

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For more on the search for the wreck of the *Geo. S. Wright*, go to: TheBeaver.ca.

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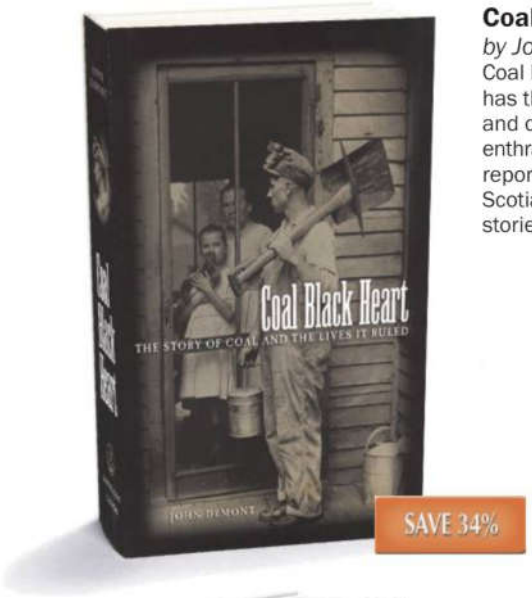

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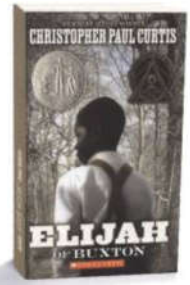

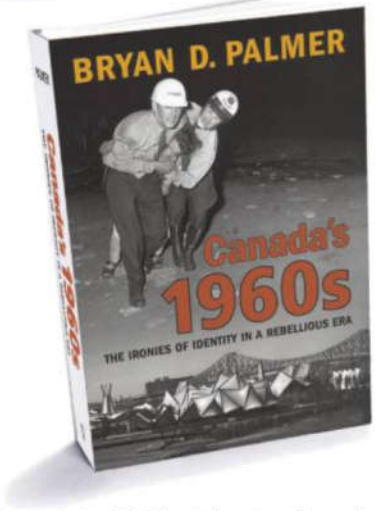

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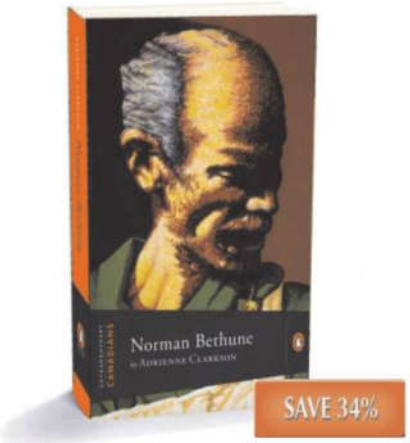

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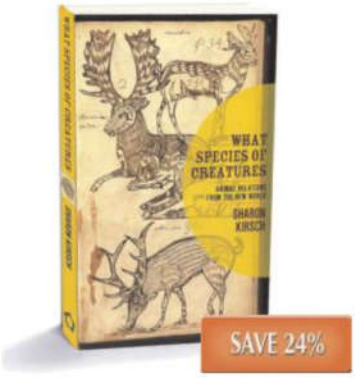

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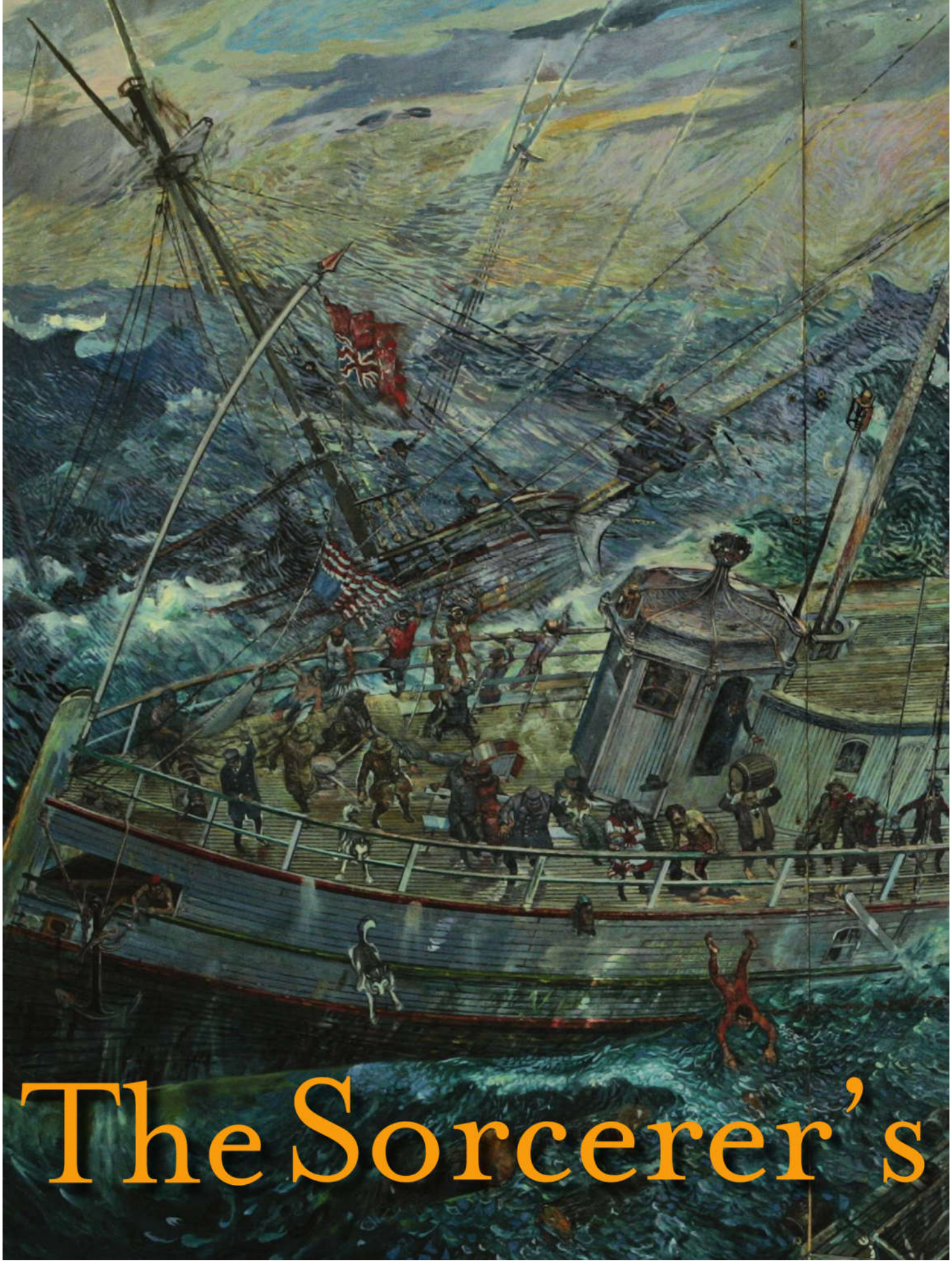

The Sorcerer's

The Wreck of the Waubuno by Ernie Taylor, circa 1970s, oil on plywood. This fanciful interpretation of the sinking includes a schooner and tug also in the area at the time but which did not sink. The upside-down flags are signals of distress.

MARINE MUSEUM OF THE GREAT LAKES AT KINGSTON/YVES PROVENCHER

Ship

The sinking of the oddly named *Waubuno* is one of the strangest in Georgian Bay's history. by Douglas Hunter

COLLECTION OF THE COLLINGWOOD MUSEUM NO 7980.81.1

Above: Charles Cameron, president of the company that owned the *Waubuno*.

Below: William Beatty, whose family built the *Waubuno* and retained an interest in her.

Opposite page: By the late 1870s, wooden sidewheel steamers like the *Waubuno* were being replaced on the Great Lakes by propeller-driven vessels.

Kate Doupe did not want to go. She was filled with dread, certain that the ship she was on would soon be going down. But the decision to disembark was not hers alone to make.

Years later, her pleas to her new husband to leave the vessel would be one of the most vivid stories surrounding the horrendous loss of the steamer *Waubuno* and all aboard her on Lake Huron's Georgian Bay in 1879.

Kate was a Scottish-born schoolteacher. On October 29, 1879, at age thirty, she married a twenty-nine-year-old physician, William Doupe, in the southwestern Ontario farming centre of Mitchell. A few weeks later the newlyweds arrived in the southern Georgian Bay port of Collingwood, Ontario, with all their possessions. They were to board the 135-foot sidewheel steamer for a passage of some sixty nautical miles up the bay to Parry Sound. From there, they would travel overland to the village of McKellar, where Doupe would set up practice.

George Plumpton Burkitt, the thirty-two-year-old captain of the "*Waub*," had been trying to leave Collingwood since Tuesday, November 18, but the passage was repeatedly scrubbed by bad weather, including snow and fierce winds.

Holding over in Collingwood was costing Burkitt's employer money, and this only increased the pressure on Burkitt to get on with it. The *Waubuno* was owned by the Collingwood-based Georgian Bay Transportation Company. Its president was Charles Cameron of Collingwood, a self-made man who owned much of the property in the town. The ship, which had been built in 1865 by the prominent Beatty family of Parry Sound, was already slated for replacement. And it was being challenged on the Parry Sound run by the new propeller-driven *Magnettawan*, owned by the Georgian Bay Lumber Company of Port Severn. The *Magnettawan* too was in Collingwood, waiting out the weather.

The *Waubuno* left Collingwood on Friday, November 21, only to be forced back into port by the weather. Three scheduled sailings would now have to be served by one, on Saturday. The season was rapidly drawing to a close. Any further delays would mean absolute losses in the number of revenue-generating passages before Collingwood's harbour closed on December 7. To delay her departure yet another day would be unthinkable.

Newlyweds Kate and William Doupe spent at least two nights on board the ship in Collingwood harbour. At some point during the extended layover, Kate was traumatized by a vivid nightmare. In it, the *Waub* had gone down; Kate, who could not swim a stroke, and William struggled in the frigid water. According to local folklore, Kate told others about the vision and implored William to find them another way to reach McKellar. But the young doctor wouldn't hear of it. All their possessions were already aboard, and there was no practical alternative for reaching their destination.

COLLINGWOOD CITY ARCHIVES

Long before sunrise on Saturday morning, there was a lull in the weather. The wind had calmed somewhat and was coming off the shore, making the waves manageable. Captain Burkitt decided to chance it. At four a.m., three hours before the scheduled departure time, the *Waubuno* abruptly steamed away, leaving behind the rival *Magnett-*

PARRY SOUND PUBLIC LIBRARY HISTORICAL COLLECTION

awan, as well as stranding a number of passengers who had decided to stay in local hotels for the night. On board were Kate and William Doupe, about eight other passengers (no manifest would survive), fourteen crew members, and a late-season surge of cargo that included barrels of flour and apples, chests of tea, a team of horses, one or two cows, and a few dogs.

The lull in the weather was brief. By 7:35 a.m., a weather station at Saugeen, about sixty nautical miles to the west, was recording a twenty-four-mile-per-hour south wind, with snow. The heavily laden *Waubuno* thrashed across an angry Nottawasaga Bay with the wind at her back, making for Christian Island, seventeen miles northeast. After wending her way through the sheltered waters of Christian, Hope, and Beckwith Islands, she could then make a final sprint of about fourteen miles across the open waters of Georgian Bay, before finding peace among the islands of the bay's eastern shore on the final approach to Parry Sound.

John Hoar, the lighthouse keeper at Christian Island, watched her pass, writing in his log: "A stiff wind from the nor'west but ship seemed to be riding well with full cargo." The wind had clocked around; the waves now had a longer fetch on which to build and were pounding the steamer more dangerously from the side than the stern. Still, Hoar thought she was managing.

The last trace of her was actually a sound — a steam whistle heard by loggers in the Moon River area later that day, which may have been a futile plea for help through blinding snow.

Anchored in the island's lee was a schooner, the *J.G. Worts*, which sought shelter from a "furious gale" with driving snow. According to the December 6 edition of the *Daily British Whig* of Kingston, the schooner's captain, a man named Taylor, watched the *Waubuno* proceed for fifteen miles as she passed to the lee of Christian Island. Taylor saw her lurch, but then she "recovered and proceeded." Taylor supposed she had been swamped, probably by breaking waves. Captain Burkitt had likely pumped the water out and carried on.

No one saw the *Waubuno*, or anyone aboard her, ever again. The last trace of her was actually a sound — a steam whistle heard by loggers in the Moon River area later that day, which may have been a futile plea for help through blinding snow.

The *Magnettawan* finally departed Collingwood around 10 a.m. that Saturday, despite the horrible weather; her captain, John O'Donnell, evidently could not abide being outrun by the rival *Waubuno*. The conditions were so bad that when O'Donnell reached Christian Island about 12:30 p.m., he decided to stay there. The weather remained stormy into Monday, when the *Magnettawan* finally appeared in Parry Sound. Indeed, it was only when the *Magnettawan* arrived without any news of the *Waub* that serious concerns were raised.

Collingwood boatyard, circa 1870, by local photographer James Asa Castor.

Searchers from Parry Sound were greeted by an appalling panorama: pieces of ship superstructure, suitcases of passengers (including a case containing Dr. Doupe's medicines), barrels, a couch from Burkitt's cabin, all strewn for miles across the waves and among the myriad islands and rocks of the remote coast. It was as if the *Waub* had been crushed by giant hands and the fragments sprinkled from a great height. There was no sign of the hull.

Because no passenger manifest survived, it's not known how many people were actually lost: at least twenty-four, but perhaps thirty or more. As the chairman of the Canadian government's Board of Steamship Inspection would confess on January 1, 1880, "for the first time (so far as I am informed) in the history of lake navigation, a steamer has gone down with all on board, leaving no one to tell the story of the disaster and scarcely a vestage [sic] of the wreck, to indicate how it happened."

A formal federal inquiry into the disaster was promised, but never held. Charles Cameron, a staunch Conservative, resisted and ultimately prevailed. Nor was a civil suit arising from the loss of life successful.

A combination of reckless risk-taking by Burkitt, bad weather, and an aging, near-decrepit vessel likely caused the disaster. But as many opinions about what precisely went wrong would be offered as there were people willing to offer them.

The sheer strangeness of the evidence did not help. The machinery of the steam engine was found within days by searchers in about sixteen feet of water near what became known as Burkitt Rock, a few hundred yards south of the Haystacks. But the hull went undetected despite a considerable search, only to be located in the spring of 1880, frozen in ice, upside down, wedged into an inlet of an island about two miles from where the machinery had been hauled up.

A first-hand report of the hull discovery placed the wreck about two miles north of the Haystacks, but the wreck thought to be the *Waubuno* today is two miles east, next to the aptly named Wreck Island in Massasauga Provincial Park. Salvors who righted the hull, and found it completely empty, with decks and content missing, might have moved it there. Alternately, the wreck may have been there all along, its location having deliberately been misreported in the *Parry Sound North Star* (which had lost its owner and editor, Baptist Noel Fisher, in the disaster) to throw off opportunistic salvors.

As enduringly puzzling as her loss is exactly why the doomed vessel was ever named the *Waubuno*. *Wabuno* in Algonquin meant a sorcerer who practised his fire-based rituals at night and drew his power from the east, the direction of the rising sun. The *Waubuno*, of course, had left Collingwood in darkness, making for the glimmer of dawn. And in the "Chanson du Wabuno" preserved in the *Journal of American Folklore*, the singer chanted, "*Les Dieux disent que nous mour-ou-rons un jour*" (The gods say we will die one day). Just as Kate Doupe's nightmare had promised.

Not a single body — not even that of any of the livestock — was ever found. This despite the fact the preponderance of debris suggested that the ship ultimately had foundered close to shore, in the vicinity of Haystack Rocks.

As for Kate Doupe's fate, there was one telling clue. A single white glove recovered from the widely scattered wreckage was identified as hers. It was returned to her mother in the town of Mitchell, where Kate had just been married.

Douglas Hunter has written widely on business, history, the environment, and sport. His next book, *Half Moon*, will be published this September by Bloomsbury Press.

Et Cetera

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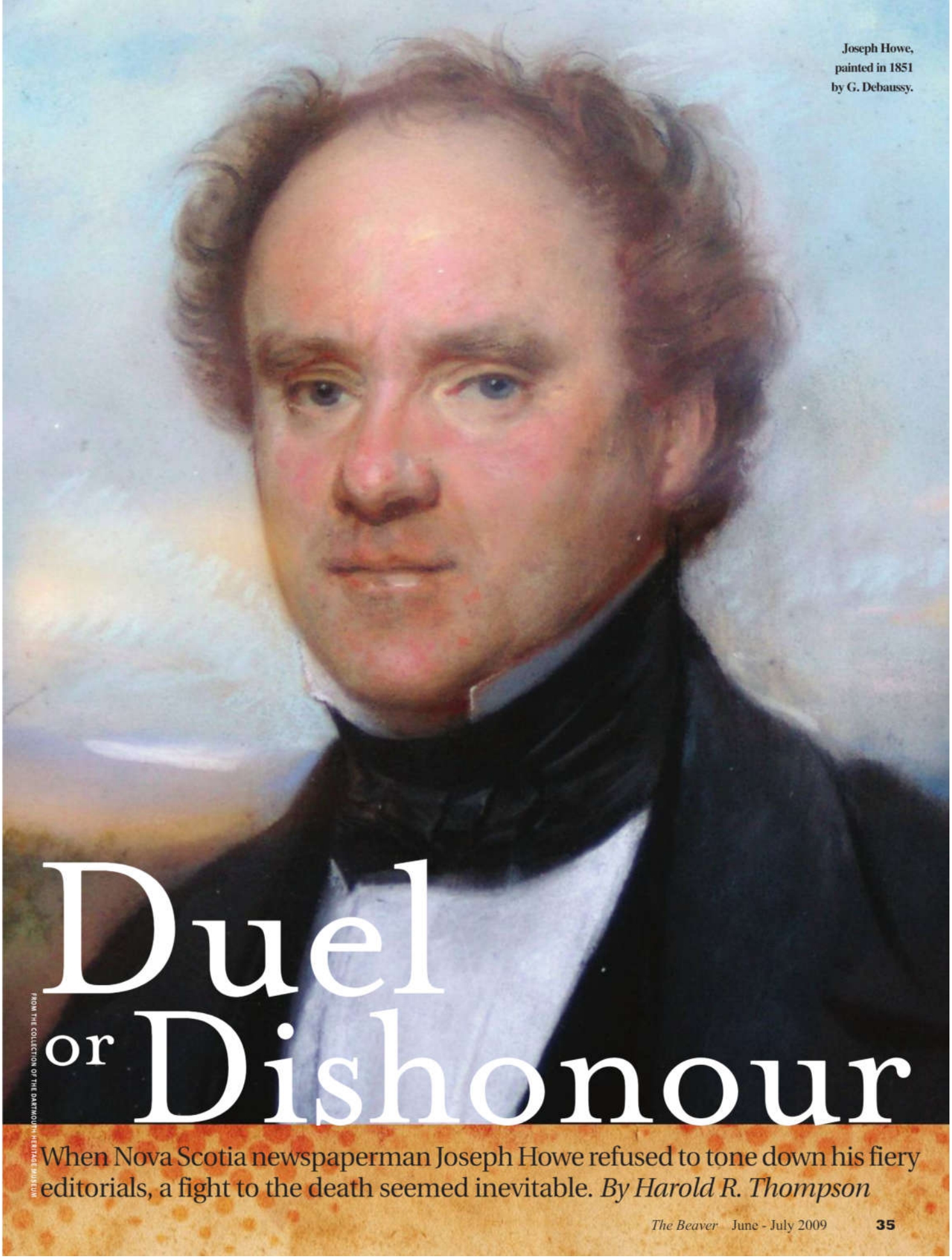
Steamboats on the Lakes by Maurice D. Smith. James Lorimer and Co., Toronto, 2005.

For more on the fascinating history of shipwrecks on the Great Lakes, listen to a podcast at TheBeaver.ca.



Joseph Howe, painted in 1851 by G. Debaussy.

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Duel or Dishonour

When Nova Scotia newspaperman Joseph Howe refused to tone down his fiery editorials, a fight to the death seemed inevitable. *By Harold R. Thompson*

MCCORD MUSEUM ARCHIVES

On the morning of March 14, 1840, Joseph Howe, newspaper publisher and Reform member of the Nova Scotia legislature, was preparing to die for his principles.

Howe had been challenged to a duel by John C. Halliburton, the son of the chief justice of Nova Scotia. The choice of weapons was pistols; the location, the old Martello Tower in Point Pleasant Park, Halifax. Howe hated the practice of duelling "as much as anybody can," but he had been unable to decline the challenge.

As the sun rose, the air was cold, with no hint of the spring to come. Howe, too, remained cool as he stared down the barrel of his opponent's weapon. He was a fighter, and though he might fall, he had come to fight.

To his second, Herbert Huntington, Howe had entrusted four letters to be delivered or published in the event of his death. One was an address to the people of Nova Scotia.

"During the political struggle in which I have been engaged," it began, "several attempts have been made to make me pay the penalty of life for the steady maintenance of my opinions."

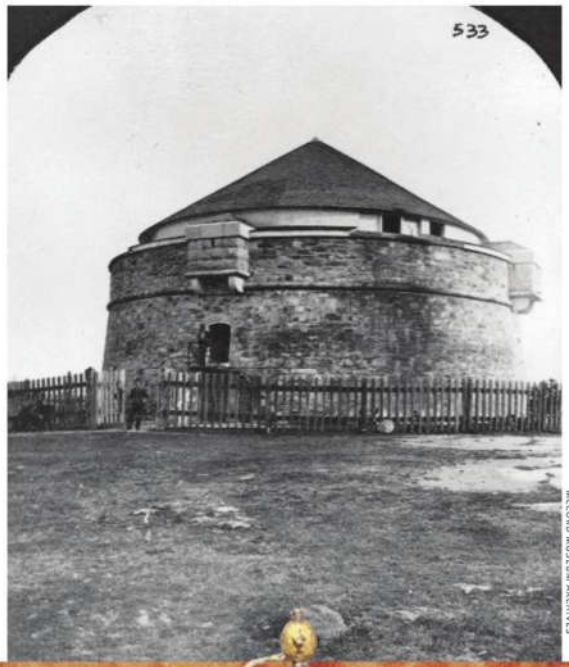
He had avoided the previous challenges to duel, but not this time.

"I feel that I am bound to hazard my life rather than blight all prospects of being useful. If I fall, cherish the principles I have taught, forgive my errors, protect my children."

Two of the other letters were addressed to employees of Howe's newspaper. The last was to his wife, Susan Ann. "I cannot trust myself to write what I feel," Howe said. "You had my boyish heart and have shared my love and entire confidence up to this hour." But, he added, she would be better off a widow than to remain with a husband "whose courage was suspected, and who was liable to continual insults which he could not resist. God in his infinite mercy bless you."

Howe had long expected this day, or a day like it, to come. The son of a Loyalist exile from the United States, Joseph Howe began his career as a journalist, travelling the province in search of stories and reporting, for the first time, the debates within the Nova Scotia legislature. In 1828 he became owner of a newspaper, the *Novascotian*, turning it into a platform for political change. He reported fraud and corruption in government, and in 1835, an editorial accusing city magistrates of lining their pockets with public funds led to a charge of libel. No lawyer in town would represent him, so Howe prepared his own defence.

In an epic six-hour speech, he defended freedom of the press and demanded more government accountability. With a verdict of not guilty, Howe emerged from the



MCCORD MUSEUM ARCHIVES

Parting Shots

Source: *Murder Among Gentlemen* by Hugh A. Halliday.

In New France, men often used swords to settle quarrels. King Louis XIV's *Édit des duels* of 1679 made virtually any party to a duel subject to punishment, but the law was poorly enforced.

Following the Seven Years War, pistols replaced swords as weapons of choice. Although illegal under British law, duelling was widely accepted and rarely prosecuted.

trial a public hero, winning a seat in the legislature the following year.

Howe soon found himself leading the struggle to bring responsible government to the colony. His weapon of choice was the pen rather than the sword. "I have been called the Papineau of Nova Scotia," he said referring to Louis-Joseph Papineau, who fought for the independence of Lower Canada, "and a connection is attempted to be shown between the Reformers of this Province, and the agitators in Canada."

However he took a dim view of armed rebellion: "In these matters, my feeling has always been … keep the peace, never break it, use the means within the law and the Constitution, and these, after patient perseverance, will procure every needful reformation."

His opponents were not so reluctant to resort to violence. Howe's first challenge to duel came in 1837. William Q. Sawers, the ranking magistrate in Halifax, objected to something he believed Howe had said in the House, demanding an apology, or for Howe to meet him on the field of honour. Howe was able to provide a transcript of the notes the legislative reporter had taken of the speech. Sawers conceded that he must have misheard.

"The gentleman, finding we were not to be bullied," Howe explained, "thought fit to be satisfied."

A second challenge came two years later from Dr. W. J. Almon, who accused Howe of insulting his father. This challenge, Howe relates, was "easily disposed of" as friends convinced Almon to withdraw.

An editorial that Howe published on March 12, 1840, sparked the challenge from John Halliburton. Howe had criticized the system that gave every opportunity to the sons of privileged families, sons such as Halliburton, to the detriment of intelligent young men with no money or connections. Howe insisted that "there had only been a fair comparison of different classes and no insult in the matter," but Halliburton would not back down. Howe knew that if he did not meet him "it would subject me to repeated annoyances from others, and perhaps either weaken my position as a public man or compel me to shoot some fellow."

Two days later, with great reluctance, Howe found himself with a loaded pistol in his hand. The combatants took their positions at opposite ends of the field. Howe stood his ground and waited, facing the moment — the possible end to his life and career — with a calm that surprised even him. He would not fire first. That honour he granted to Halliburton.

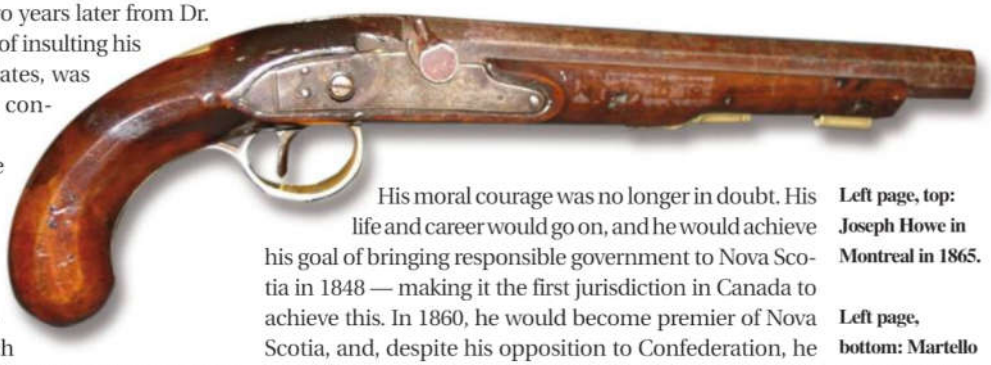
Halliburton raised his weapon and took careful aim. The pistol cracked. The bullet missed.

"There shall be no blood on my hand," Howe had written in his letter to Susan Ann. True to his word, he raised his pistol and fired into the air. "Let the creature live," he supposedly remarked.

"I never intended to fire at him and would not for ten thousand pounds," he said later. Providence, he declared, had spared him, and "strengthened my hands by the very means which were taken to destroy me." What he had won was clear to him, nothing less than "perfect independence."

Howe would be challenged again, but he would refuse.

With great reluctance, Howe found himself with a loaded pistol in his hand.



His moral courage was no longer in doubt. His life and career would go on, and he would achieve his goal of bringing responsible government to Nova Scotia in 1848 — making it the first jurisdiction in Canada to achieve this. In 1860, he would become premier of Nova Scotia, and, despite his opposition to Confederation, he would enter the House of Commons in 1867 as a member of Canada's first federal parliament.

Harold R. Thompson is the operations officer with the military interpretation program at the Halifax Citadel National Historic Site of Canada. He has written a novel, set during the American Revolution, that is due for release this year.

Et Cetera

Joseph Howe, Volume I: Conservative Reformer 1804-1848 by J. Murray Beck. McGill-Queen's University Press, Kingston and Montreal, 1982.

Murder Among Gentlemen: A History of Duelling in Canada by Hugh A. Halliday. Robin Brass Studio, Toronto, 1999.

Left page, top: Joseph Howe in Montreal in 1865.

Left page, bottom: Martello Tower in Halifax, where Howe's duel took place.

Above: Howe's duelling pistol.

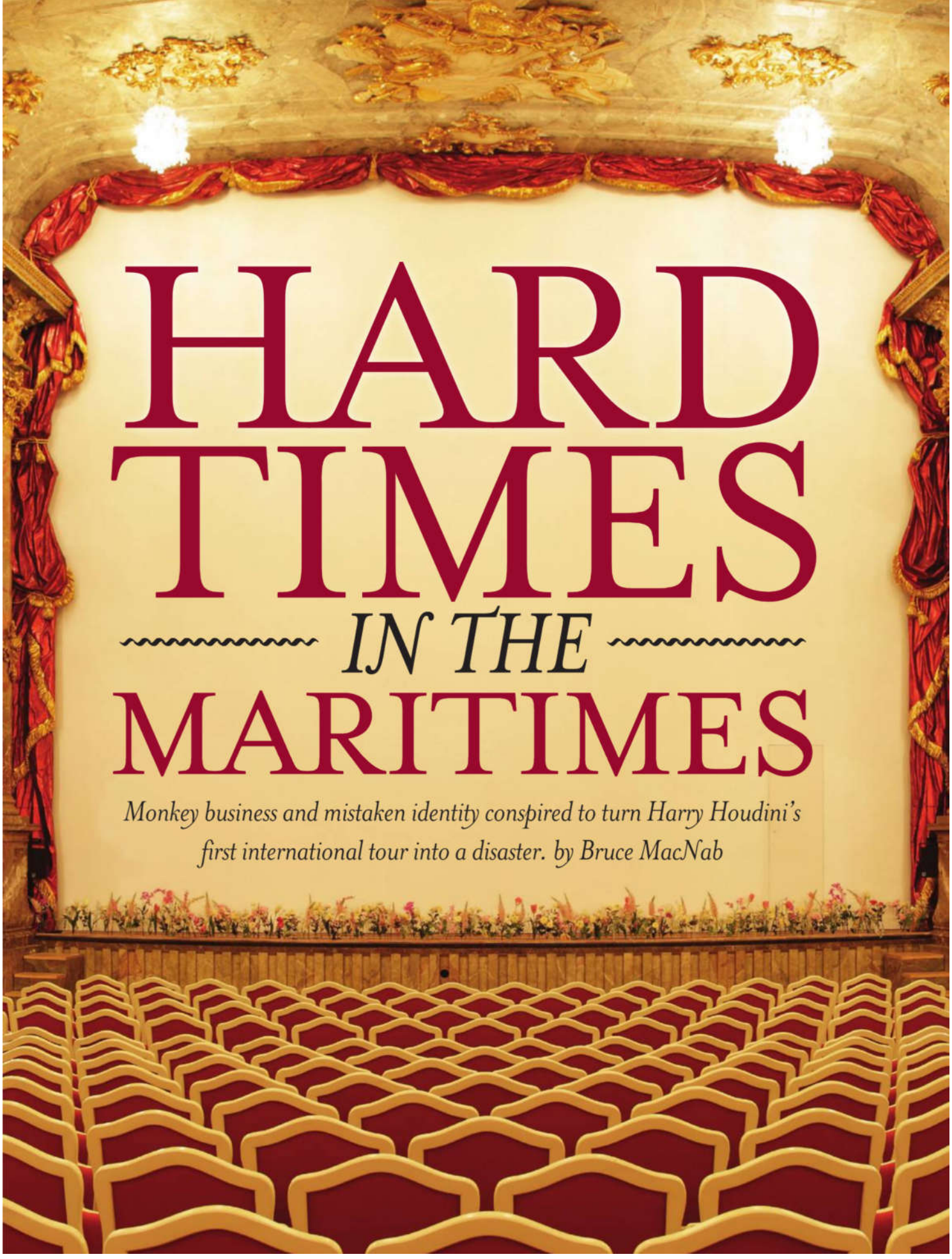
HAROLD R. THOMPSON

From 1761 to 1888, only one person was ever convicted in a British North American court of having killed another in a duel.

The last man to die in a duel in Canada was Major Henry Warde, who was killed in 1838 by his friend, Robert Sweeney. One story had it that Warde had an interest in Sweeney's wife.

Duelling fell into disrepute from the late 1840s onward, thanks in part to Queen Victoria. She repealed an act that punished officers for not upholding their honour. She also amended the Articles of War to allow for the court martialling of officers who participated in duels.

Harry Houdini as a young man, about the time he and his wife Bess started performing together.



HARD TIMES IN THE MARITIMES

Monkey business and mistaken identity conspired to turn Harry Houdini's first international tour into a disaster. by Bruce MacNab

Harry Houdini watched helplessly as the sheriff seized his props for non-payment of debts. Disappointment and frustration turned to despair as his lovingly crafted illusions disappeared into a foggy night in the summer of 1896.

Farewell, *Voodoo Temple of Bra-ha-ma!* Your secrets will forever remain a mystery in the drafty stone cellar below a police lock-up. So long *Cremation of Floribel!* Your troubles have come to a merciful end here in Canada. For Harry Houdini and his wife Bess, there was no such luck. The young couple was broke and stranded in Nova Scotia.

The Houdinis in 1894, the year they met and married.
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

What very few people realize is that early in his career, long before he became famous, Harry Houdini toured the Canadian Maritimes as a humble magician's assistant. One Maritime community even holds the distinction of hosting the very first international performance headlined by Houdini.

Prior to touring Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Harry and Bess (Wilhelmina Beatrice Rahner) had been serving a gruelling vaudeville apprenticeship. The couple often performed their illusions up to twenty times a day at dime museums. They also had a stint with a travelling circus, with Bess performing as a singing clown while Harry worked the sideshow and occasionally posed as the circus wild man.

After touring New England with a fledgling variety show that went bankrupt, twenty-two-year-old Harry Houdini and his wife jumped at a chance to join a professional theatre tour through the Maritime provinces. The Marco Magic Company was bankrolled by Edward Dooley, a Connecticut-based performer who went by the stage name "Marco the Magician."

The first stop on the Maritime tour was Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. On May 28, 1896, Marco and his assistants, including Harry and Bess Houdini, prepared for two shows at Yarmouth's Boston Marine Hall. Upon their arrival, Marco and the Houdinis realized they were up against some formidable competition. Rufus Somerby, sixty-three, a veteran vaudeville manager and ventriloquist, had begun a summer-long tour of the region in Yarmouth with his wildly popular Professor Wormwood's Monkey Theatre.

Unfortunately for Marco and the Houdinis, these monkeys had talent to burn! They boxed, leapt from trapezes, rode bicycles, and walked on a high wire. The monkeys also appeared "appropriately costumed" to perform as actors and dancers. As an added bonus, the show featured an anteater and a badger, and closed with clowns and hilarious fun makers. All this for only twenty-five cents! How could mere magicians compete with such a spectacle?

As they say, the show must go on, so Houdini set to work promoting the upcoming performance. In one publicity stunt, Houdini visited a downtown store and had Yarmouth's chief of police handcuff him with a pair of the city's own regulation irons. Within seconds, the young showman returned the unlocked handcuffs to the chief.

The troupe performed two shows in Yarmouth, which were both well attended. The locals were mystified by the show's illusions, which included escapes, levitation, and mind reading.

At the next stop, in Saint John, New Brunswick, the

troupe performed to modest houses. From there, Marco and the Houdinis departed for Halifax and a scheduled weeklong stand at the Academy of Music on Pleasant Street (now Barrington Street).

They arrived in mid-June to find the citizens of Halifax embracing summer, enjoying traditional activities like strawberry festivals and picnic excursions to McNab's Island. Bands were performing at the public gardens and a sizeable nautical fair was about to begin.

What they didn't realize, however, was that Professor Wormwood had already been up to his monkey business in the city, and left with a new attraction — baby monkeys which had been born during the tour. The pint-sized primates had won the crowds' hearts, and Somerby promised that the babies would be trained as understudies, ensuring a future generation of monkey theatre.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Welsh Brothers Circus, 1896. The Houdinis are in the front row, on the right.

Houdini and Marco realized they had their work cut out for them — it's hard to upstage baby monkeys. Once again, Houdini came up with a publicity stunt. This time, it was a jailbreak from the police headquarters. Houdini was stripped, handcuffed, and locked in a jail cell by Police Chief Joseph O'Sullivan. Within minutes, a call came from the Queen Hotel. It was Houdini. He had escaped and was asking for the return of his clothes.

Unfortunately, the trained monkeys weren't the troupe's only competition for the public's attention. Marco and the Houdinis had arrived in town on the eve of a federal election that saw a Nova Scotian prime minister, Sir Charles Tupper, running against Quebec's Wilfrid Laurier. The election was the talk of Halifax, leaving little room in newspapers for editors to promote the upcoming shows of a visiting magic company.

Yet both Halifax papers sent reporters to review the show on opening night on Monday, June 29. The *Acadian* gushed, "The trunk mystery has been done here before, but never so clever as by Harry Houdini." The *Halifax Herald* also praised the performances, but reported, "Marco failed to draw a large audience."

What had gone wrong? Where were the crowds?

It was then that Marco and Houdini discovered an unfortunate coincidence. Just nine months earlier, a dubious magician with a very similar name, "Markos," had caused quite a controversy at the same Halifax theatre. One of the lowlights of Markos's appearance in Halifax included reneging on a promise to catch bullets bare-handed — even after four members of the 66th Batallion "Princess Louise Fusiliers" appeared onstage with their Snider rifles. Later in the week, an audience member attacked Markos onstage when a hypnotism challenge took a bad turn.

It seems that Haligonians simply assumed Marco was really Markos, returning to Halifax to make a quick score with another round of mischief and false advertising.

Before Houdini could clear up the misunderstanding, another crisis erupted. It turned out Marco the Magician wasn't who he claimed to be either.

Marco — who billed himself as the "Monarch of Mystery from the Egyptian Hall" — was actually Michael Dooley, a local lad from Tower Road in Halifax.

Dooley had claimed in advertisements that this was his "first time" in Halifax. This was also stretching the truth — he had performed on the very same stage years before, as a member of the Egleston Opera Company.

Despite the positive reviews, the turnout for the second show was dreadful. At the third show, it seemed that debt collectors outnumbered the audience.

Faced with dwindling ticket sales and mounting bills, Dooley, a.k.a. Marco, realized his situation was hopeless. He cancelled the remaining dates of his week-long appearance and left Halifax the next morning on a steamship bound for Boston. Having lost his life savings bankrolling the failed tour, Dooley was forced to return to his regular job as an organist in Connecticut.

As for Harry and Bess Houdini, they suddenly found themselves abandoned and out of money in Halifax. They spent at least one uncomfortable night sleeping in a hallway before some caring citizens in Dartmouth offered to help the destitute couple regroup.

Harry Houdini with his mother Cecilia Steiner Weiss

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

With a handful of Dooley's props, the Houdinis organized a magic show at Dartmouth's St. Peter's Hall. It was this long-forgotten performance, on July 6, 1896, that marked the beginning of Harry Houdini's international career as a headline entertainer. Audiences filled the theatre and thoroughly enjoyed the performance. The shows were held over for an extra day, with a matinee offered to meet the demand for the ten-cent tickets.

The Houdinis spent the rest of July and most of August performing sporadically in small towns throughout Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Sometimes they crossed paths with their primate pals from the travelling monkey show; too often, Houdini shared his dressing room with the stale stench of monkeys.

The Houdinis eventually scraped together enough cash to return to New York, where poor finances forced the couple to move in with Houdini's mother. Houdini was so crestfallen after his disastrous Maritime tour that he considered giving up show business. He even tried to sell his secrets to other magicians.

Thankfully, Houdini's retirement from magic was short-lived. Less than four years later, he was an international sensation, setting attendance records throughout Europe.

In 1900, after a particularly difficult escape from a challenger's handcuffs, Houdini was carried through the streets of Berlin by a jubilant crowd of theatre-goers. That night, feeling grateful for his success and fame, he wrote letters to some of the performers who had supported him in the lean years. One letter was sent to his old employer, "Marco the Magician."

Dooley, a.k.a. "Marco," was surprised and touched that his former assistant would even contact him, let alone thank him after the embarrassing 1896 Maritime tour. In a letter, Dooley replied: "Your letter expresses more gratitude to me for what little favor I may have done for you … it shows what I knew all along, that you have a good heart and it is in the right place."

Bruce MacNab's grandfather and great-grandfather performed in orchestras at the Halifax Academy of Music from the 1890s until it closed as the Majestic Theatre in 1929. Bruce's non-fiction book, *Escape from the Maritimes: The Canadian Apprenticeship of Harry Houdini*, will be released in 2010.

Et Cetera

The Secret Life of Houdini: The Making of America's First Superhero by William Kalush and Larry Sloman. Atria Books, New York, 2006.

The Story of Dartmouth by John P. Martin. Privately published, Dartmouth, N.S., 1957.

Westward, Ho!

Many new immigrants were lured by the Prairies' pull, says Dave Obee.

The Weiss family in Edmonton, circa 1929.

They arrived at Pier 21 in Halifax on December 20, 1928 — a family fleeing the Soviet Union, looking for a better life in Canada.

After spending six months in the Dutch port of Rotterdam, waiting for permission to come to Canada, my grandparents Assaf and Berta Weiss, along with their son Helmut and daughter Delilah — my mother — were in their country of choice.

Their ultimate destination was the Prairies, a region that was attracting many of the new arrivals from continental Europe. These immigrants helped develop the land and shape the nation, and gave the West a rich multicultural flavour that has survived through the decades.

My Weiss grandparents had told the immigration authorities that their destination was Winnipeg. A check of old passenger lists indicates that their statement was typical, even though many of the new arrivals were in Winnipeg for only a matter of days.

Winnipeg was the location of some key immigration and colonization offices, including the one for the German Baptist Board, which had helped my grandparents. Once immigrants checked in with the board, they could be on their way to other parts of the West.

The goal of my grandparents was Edmonton, in the heart of a region that had already welcomed hundreds of immigrants from their ancestral area in Ukraine.

It was common for new arrivals to settle in areas where they had friends, relatives, and countrymen. In a strange land, they would feel less like strangers if they surrounded themselves with people from the old country.

The rush to the Prairies started in the early 1870s, when homesteads in Manitoba were made available.

Many of the early arrivals were from Ontario, where the supply of available farmland had been exhausted. There was keen demand for those newly surveyed quarter sections on the Prairies. As the prairie lands were taken up from east to west, more people from other areas lined up to take up a homestead or pursue opportunities in the towns and cities.

The end result was an ethnic mix much different from the rest of Canada.

In the census of 1931, for example, 15.4 percent of the people in the three Prairie provinces said they had been born in continental Europe, compared to 4.3 percent in the rest of Canada. About 10.8 percent of Albertans had been born in the United States, compared to 2.8 percent elsewhere in Canada. Americans came north when the supply of free farmland south of the border was exhausted, and by that time there was much more land available in Alberta than in Saskatchewan or Manitoba.

More people were drawn to British Columbia by resource industries than by the potential for farming. Since federal rules prohibited people from many continental European countries from working, other than in farming or as domestic help, that closed the door to the jobs in B.C.

In the 1931 census, 26.2 percent of British Columbians said they had been born in the British Isles, compared to 9.9 percent for the rest of Canada.

There is an even more striking difference, resulting from B.C.'s place on the Pacific Ocean. In 1931, 5.1 percent of British Columbians had been born in Asia — compared to a quarter of one percent in the rest of the country.

One of the best sources for tracking down someone who immigrated to Canada is the website of the Canadian Genealogy Centre (part of Library and Archives Canada) at www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/genealogy/index-e.html. Go to the Immigration and Citizenship section to find copies of passenger lists as well as indexes to those lists up to 1935. The site also includes a database of naturalizations from 1915 to 1932.

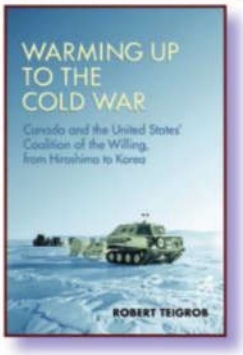
Ancestry.ca, a pay-for-use site, also has an extensive collection of immigration material online, posted in cooperation with Library and Archives Canada. Border entry records — listing people who entered Canada from the United States after 1908 — are due to go online in 2009.

The Nanaimo Family History Society's website (at members.shaw.ca/nanaimo.fhs) includes an index of arrivals at Quebec from 1906 to 1910. Another site, ancestorsonboard.com, has records of people outbound from the British Isles from 1890 to 1960.

It took my grandparents about eight months to get from their colony in Ukraine to their new home in Alberta. Today, thanks to the Internet, it takes just seconds to find information about the arrivals of our immigrant ancestors.

Dave Obee has been researching family history on the Prairies for thirty years and has written several books about geneology.

For even more genealogy advice and information, check out our Canadian Roots website at TheBeaver.ca



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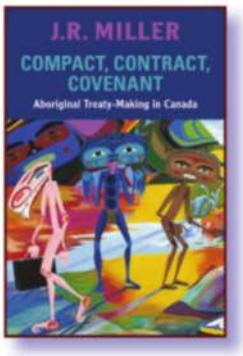

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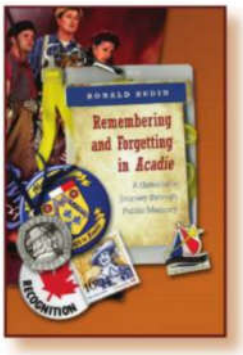

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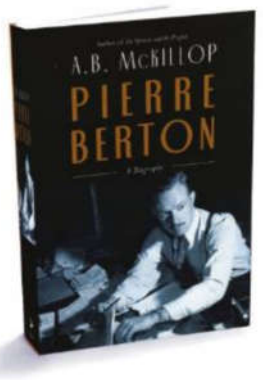

BENCHMARK HISTORIAN

Pierre Berton: A Biography
by A.B. McKillop
McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 2008
808 pp., illus., $37.99 hardcover

A. B. McKillop's decision to write a biography of Pierre Berton took some nerve. Berton is, after all, a Canadian icon. Indeed, Charles Templeton in 1979 called him "Mr. Canada." To tell Berton's life runs the risk of either giving excessive praise or deflating a source of national pride.

There is also such a thing as too much material. Berton published hundreds of newspaper columns and more than forty books ranging from *Cats I have Known and Loved* through *The National Dream*. His life revolved around publishers and writers, all of whom loved to keep every piece of correspondence they wrote or received. He was on television for years and many of the programs were preserved.

Most of all, though, McKillop required some nerve because he is an academic historian writing about a figure who challenged academics about the purpose of history and the necessity of readability. The author must have been conscious of the tension between academic analysis and the importance of a good narrative. Fortunately, McKillop succeeds superbly in this daunting task. *Pierre Berton: A Biography* is thorough, analytical, and yet a tremendously enjoyable book to read. It should become a benchmark for future Canadian biography.

Throughout his life, Pierre Berton seemed to move at a higher than normal speed. After completing a degree at the University of British Columbia, he worked for two Vancouver newspapers, served in World War II, was hired away to Toronto by *Maclean's*, and then from *Maclean's* to the *Toronto Star*, was a war correspondent in Korea, served as a panellist on *Front Page Challenge* for decades, had his own television shows, won two Governor General's Awards in his thirties, and published more than forty books!

Berton was Canada's best-selling author through the last half of the twentieth century, and the mainstays of his success were the unlikely area of non-fiction publishing and the even more unlikely subject, in many minds, of Canadian history. Along the way, he and his wife Janet raised an ever-growing brood of children.

As McKillop takes us through this fascinating life he ably conveys the complexity and contradictions that make up his subject. Berton was born in 1920 in the Yukon to a father who was a failed gold prospector and a mother who had a dash of Victorian snobbishness in her. Both parents were highly intelligent, but less than successful on their own terms. His northern childhood and the contradictions in his parents' lives were instrumental in shaping Berton's complex mixture of impudence, insecurity, and drive.

In his younger years he had difficulty fitting in socially. He tended toward brashness and was insistent on being the centre of attention. This "arrogance," as many saw it, could have been a fatal flaw, but was countered by his obvious brilliance, wit, and hard work. His insecurities also drove him to succeed. From the time he first wrote columns for the UBC newspaper through to his final years, Pierre Berton

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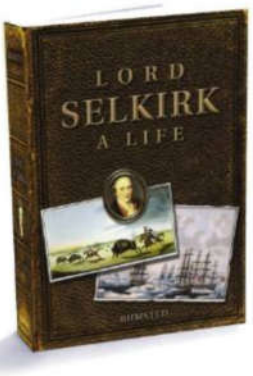
always seemed to be working, always looking to the next project.

As his career developed from successful journalist to author and television personality, Berton's complex character continued to shape his life. On the one side, there is no doubt that the drive toward success and fame was calculated. As McKillop well demonstrates, Berton was aware very early of the potential of "the Berton brand." One anecdote sums this up well. In 1952, soon after the CBC began television broadcasting, Berton appeared on a panel. He disliked the experience and resolved never to go on TV again. The next day, however, a taxi driver recognized him from the broadcast. Berton instantly absorbed the lesson. Television, he said, "was the greatest marketing tool yet devised." Over the next decades he would use it to maximum effect.

Yet Berton was also a man with genuine principles. There is no doubt that he loved the North and loved Canada. He was also a strong crusader for the underdog, especially in his *Toronto Star* years.

Perhaps the best way to view his career is to see its aspects as symbiotic. His commitment to Canada and to the underdog reinforced the Berton brand, while that brand gave power to the causes he supported. McKillop captures all of this in his definitive biography of the man who is so strongly identified with all things Canadian.

Reviewed by **Doug Owram**, professor of history at UBC Okanagan, a member of the Royal Society of Canada, and author or editor of nine books on various aspects of Canadian history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



RED RIVER MADNESS

Lord Selkirk: A Life
by J.M. Bumsted
University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg, 2008
500 pp., illus., $39.95 hardcover

The narrative thread that unifes J.M. Bumsted's sprawling biography of Thomas Douglas, the fifth earl of Selkirk, is Bumsted's

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own struggle to understand and explain his contradictory, pigheaded, exasperating hero. Or was Selkirk a villain? During his lifetime, 1771–1820, Selkirk was castigated by a host of critics, from peers to peasants, as a rapacious land speculator. But after his death, his fortune and reputation ruined, Selkirk was praised — at least in Red River, the colony he founded in 1812 — as a pious philanthropist.

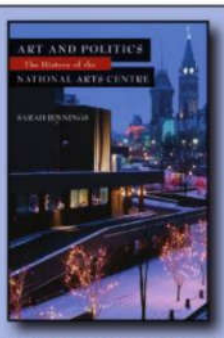
Red River, now Winnipeg, is Selkirk's only permanent legacy in Canada, but it was one of many of the Scottish laird's audacious wilderness adventures: Earlier, he settled Highlanders in Prince Edward Island and on a dismal swamp north of Lake Erie he named Baldoon. An absentee landlord — Selkirk didn't visit Red River until 1817 — he left "my people," as he called his settlers, to the mercies of his managers and the charity of the native people. Baldoon failed when the first settlers died in epidemics; Red River was almost destroyed by violent confrontations with Canadian fur traders and Métis hunters. Was Selkirk undertaking scientific experiments in modern agriculture, impetuous philanthropy, or, as Bumsted says of Red River, schemes of "sheer and unadulterated madness?"

An authority on eighteenth-century Scotland, Bumsted tries to portray young Tom Douglas as a child of the Scottish Enlightenment, a flowering of philosophy, science, and radical politics centred at the University of Edinburgh, where Tom was a student. Yet nothing is revealed about this aloof, inarticulate young man to suggest that he was anything more than a dilettante, with the feudal, paternalistic views of his class. Selkirk owed his own title to the deaths, in rapid succession, of his four older brothers, and wasted his time in the intrigues of the House of Lords.

Bumsted speculates that as Selkirk grew older he suffered from manic, obsessive behaviour that destroyed his judgment — the consequence, perhaps, of the tuberculosis that killed him and the drugs, including mercury, he was taking to treat it. Selkirk the swashbuckler began buying up shares in the nearly bankrupt Hudson's Bay Company, and his Red River settlement was founded, with the company's connivance, to destroy their hated Canadian rivals for the fur trade, the North West Company of Montreal. The HBC granted Selkirk an immense tract of land that intercepted the Nor'Westers' historic canoe routes from Lake Superior to Red River and Lake Winnipeg, and he in turn intended to use Highlander immigrants as "shock troops" to drive the Nor'Westers out of the country.

Refusing to take up arms, the Highlanders became human shields in a bloody guerrilla war between the rival companies, with First Nations and Métis siding with one faction or the other. When the victorious Nor'Westers destroyed the settlement in 1815 and transported the settlers to Upper Canada, Selkirk hired his own private army and captured, without resistance, Fort William, the North West Company's stronghold on Lake Superior. There he remained, lord of the wilderness, for the winter, returning, at his leisure, to account for his burglary.

Lord Selkirk: A Life devotes too much space to political and legal machinations, skims over dramatic events, and barely acknowledges the sufferings of Selkirk's colonists. Bumsted adopts Selkirk's own sneering attitude towards the uncouth Highlanders and the North West Company, tarring Canada's fur trade princes as rogues and thieves, although they included explorers Sir Alexander Mackenzie and puritanical David Thompson. Nor does he place Selkirk's own melodrama sufficiently in the violent, chaotic context of his time: the American and French Revolutions, the Napoleonic wars, and, in Canada, the War of 1812.



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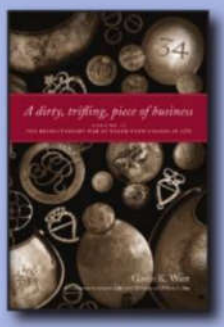

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Reviews

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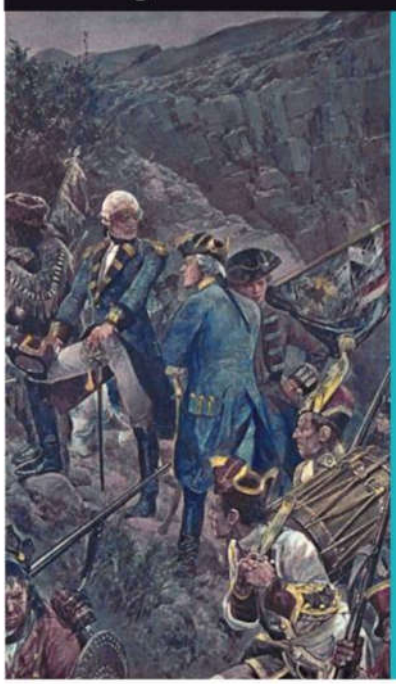

The Women of 1759
Behind every man on the Plains of Abraham was a woman who played a key role in the battle that shaped the future of Canada.
BY PETER MACLEOD

The Blunder of Dieppe
An eminent Canadian historian examines how this WWII "fiasco" was whitewashed by politicians and the military.
BY J.L. GRANATSTEIN.

Labrador Sled Dogs
With good sled dogs scarce during the gold rush, the Mounties recruited black labs from the East Coast, with mixed results.
BY ANN CHANDLER

"WHEN WE CHANGE THE WAY WE LOOK AT THINGS, THE THINGS WE LOOK AT CHANGE."

Nothing is more certain than the coming glut and retirement of Baby Boomers in Canada: 4 million in the 65-Plus group and the same number in the 55-Plus market. These numbers will *double* in the next two decades.

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Having spent more than thirty years immersed in the Selkirk papers, Bumsted laments Selkirk's "almost pathological reticence to reveal his interior life and thought." Yet I found Selkirk's thoughts and emotions clearly revealed in the voluminous letters and pamphlets Bumsted quotes. Of the Red River Métis, Selkirk writes: "Canadians, mixed with the bastard sons of others, who had thrown off the restraints of regular society, & cohabiting with Indian squaws have formed a combination of the vices of civilized and savage life." Selkirk's own words reveal him to be the prototype of the corporate buccaneer. *Lord Selkirk: A Life* is a biography for our times.

Reviewed by **Heather Robertson**, who lives south of West Gwillimbury, Ontario, where Scots refugees from Selkirk's Red River colony settled and prospered.

MORE BOOKS

Operation Husky: The Canadian Invasion of Sicily, July 10–August 7, 1943
by Mark Zuehlke
Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver, 2008
480 pp., illus., $36.95 hardcover

Operation Husky is the latest work from Mark Zuehlke to guide readers into an important and often ignored Canadian military battle. In July 1943, Allied forces under the command of General Eisenhower staged one of the largest amphibious operation of the Second World War, with the Canadian First Division landing alongside American and British forces on the southern coast of Sicily.

The operation has largely been forgotten but for references to the feuding American and British commanders, Generals Patton and Montgomery. Zuehlke, however, provides a careful and thoroughly researched version of events that highlights the nearly month-long campaign by the First Canadian Division.

While the initial landing was largely unopposed, the Canadians faced difficult fighting through the hills towards Mount Etna. *Operation Husky* recounts the brutality of the combat as Allied forces raced to capture German forces before they escaped to the Italian mainland.

Most lacking from *Operation Husky* are first-hand accounts of combat situations — ironically, one of the very things for which Zuehlke is best known. The interviews that brought readers the brutal experience of Ortona more than ten years ago have given way to a heavy emphasis on autobiographies, battalion war diaries, after-action reports, and medal citations.

Only a single new interview is listed for *Operation Husky* — a reminder of how quickly the veterans available to share their stories are passing away. Zuehlke makes note of this in his introduction, asking Canadians to take time to write down the stories from Canadian veterans before it's too late. **— Joel Ralph**

What Species of Creatures: Animal Relations from the New World
by Sharon Kirsch
New Star Books, Vancouver, 2008
240 pp., illus., $19 paperback

When European explorers, traders, and settlers arrived in North America, not only did they find a great diversity of strange and wondrous creatures, their encounters with these unfamiliar animals often resulted in relations unimaginable in the Old World.

Consider Gabriel Sagard's "companion muskrat," or the playful polar bear David Thompson met at York Factory, or Samuel Hearne's live-in beavers — any of which would have offended the strictly hierarchical relations among God's creatures prescribed by European philosophers. That the beavers were "remarkably fond of rice and plum pudding … and would eat partridges and fresh venison very freely," as Hearne tells it, suggests that their meeting with Europeans brought forth unusual behaviour from four-legged species, too.

In *What Species of Creatures*, Sharon Kirsch tells that these curious associations resulted as much from character traits peculiar to trappers and missionaries as from the unforeseen environments in which Europeans found themselves. The New World was a land of bountiful game as well as marvels like the hummingbird, for which chroniclers offered competing claims of its smallness and beauty.

The time Kirsch spent with primary sources is demonstrated both in her revealing and often humorous citations and in the somewhat unconventional forms her own chapters take on. For instance, Hudson's Bay Company factor James Isham's penchant for composing lists, rather than the paragraphs demanded by the company's London Committee, is explored and partly mimicked in the chapter "An ABC of Animals."

Kirsch explains that things usually turned out poorly for natives who brought furs to the company — their trades being subject to a seemingly arbitrary arithmetic — and worse still for animals, despite the reputed sagacity of both the fox and the beaver. Foxes were first hunted and later caged for the eventual sale of their coats, Sagard's muskrat died when the friar turned in his sleep, York Factory's polar bear was shot by a sleepy sailor, and Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix proved as willing to consume beaver — albeit only boiled, not dried — as Hearne was to live among them. **— P.K.**

Check out the History Society Book Club

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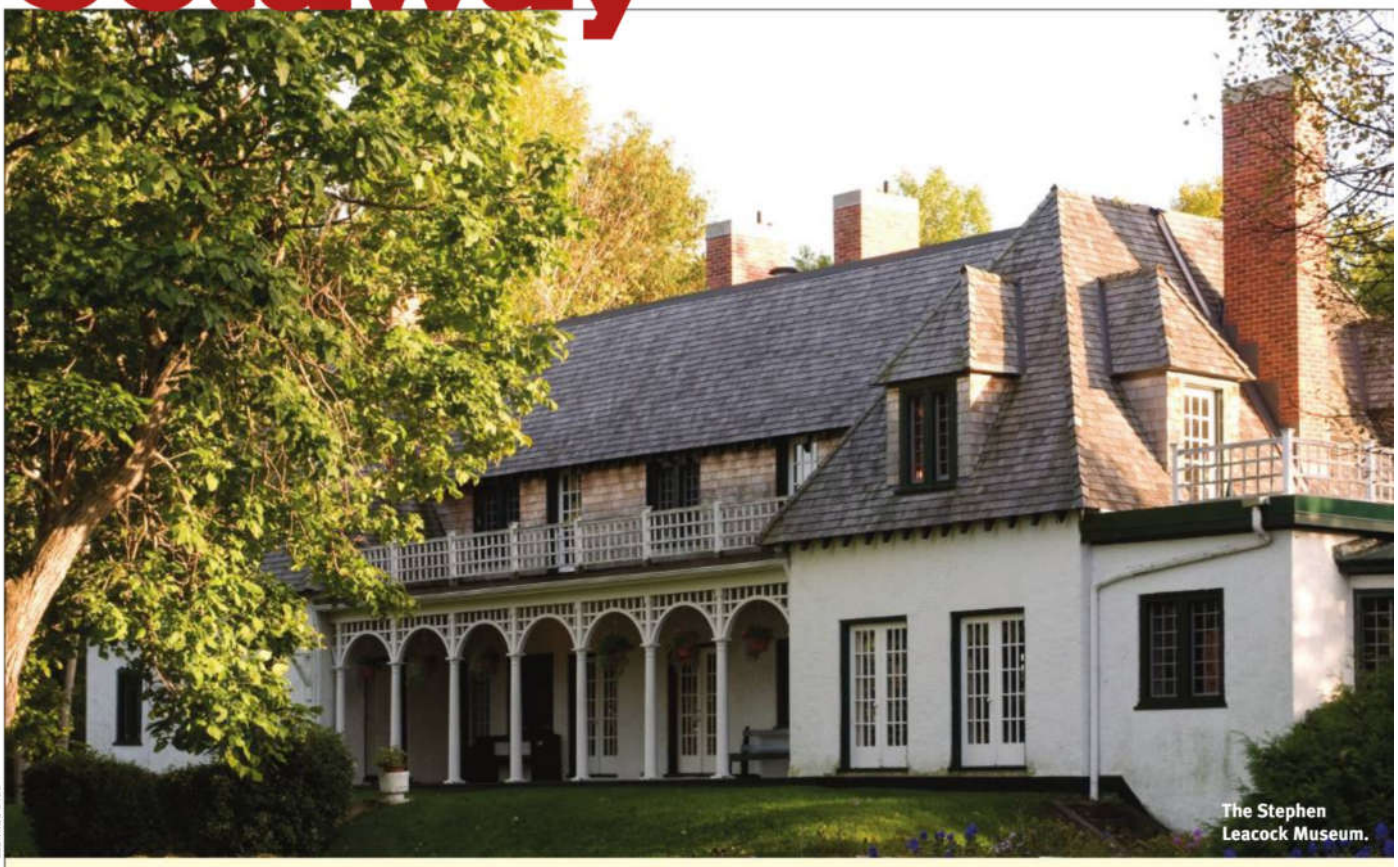

COLE BENNETT

The Stephen Leacock Museum.

Marvellous Mariposa

Penelope Johnston visits Orillia, the inspiration for Stephen Leacock's beloved *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town.*

"I don't know whether you know Mariposa, if not it is of no consequence, for if you know Canada at all, you are probably well acquainted with a dozen towns just like it." — Stephen Leacock

Mariposa, the fictional little town that Stephen Leacock immortalized in his humorous 1912 book *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, has now grown up to be a picturesque city (population 32,000).

Orillia — the Ontario community Leacock used as the model for Mariposa — has retained the small-town flavour that captured the humorist's heart.

On this day, I head down the city's main street, Mississaga, which leads all the way down to Lake Couchiching. I love walking along the boardwalk, past the new marina down by the lake.

Every Saturday, the farmer's market, located behind the Orillia Opera House, offers a cornucopia of breads, jellies, jams, and handicrafts. On Mississaga, the Mariposa Market is great for light lunches and morning coffee.

I decide to wander around the town to see the homes and places that inspired Leacock. Judge John McCosh's former home (which was the model for the mansion owned by *Sunshine*'s Judge Pepperleigh) is now the Mundell Funeral Home. It still retains some of its elegance, with its seven fireplaces and interesting mahogany mouldings.

By far, my favourite attractions are Orillia's summer festivals, beginning with the international Mariposa Folk Festival held the first weekend after the long July weekend. Taking place in J.B. Tudhope Memorial Park, fronting Lake Couchiching, the festival will this year feature Buffy Sainte Marie, The Proclaimers, and Luke Doucet.

The Leacock Literary Festival occurs the following weekend, with its authors' showcase held at the Stephen Leacock Museum National Historic Site. Every year there are plays on the lawn, tea-and-strawberry parties, and, last but not least, book readings by writers such as Wayne Johnston, Russell Smith, Allisa York, and Ted Barris.

Leacock's ties to Orillia run deep. In 1908, he bought thirty-three acres for a summer cottage because his mother lived nearby. He named the adjacent body of water Old Brewery Bay, as it was near the ruins of an old brewery.

In all, Leacock spent over thirty-five summers here, a welcome refuge from his responsibilities as professor and chairman of the Department of Economics and Political Science at McGill University.

It was here that Leacock would eventually meet his wife, Beatrix Hamilton. The pair met on the tennis courts of Southwood, a large summer place owned by Beatrix's uncle, Captain Henry Pellatt, whose son, Sir Henry Pellatt, built Casa Loma in Toronto. Leacock and Beatrix were married in 1900. She died in 1925.

Visitors to Orillia certainly should plan to visit Leacock's home, which is open to the public. I love wandering through the nineteen-room, stucco rectangular building, with its long veranda that faces a refurbished two-storey boathouse. It's here that Leacock would write for several hours per day before spending the rest of the day fishing and sailing.

Leacock memorabilia abounds on the ground floor of his home. In the dining room, a mirror hangs that was installed by Leacock so he could keep an eye on the help.

In the rear of the Leacock home, covered by a glass solarium overlooking the garden and the sundial, hangs a Karsh photo showing Leacock sitting at the table paying his bills. Hanging on the wall nearby is his old hat, along with his walking stick, tennis racquets, golf clubs, and a fishing net.

In Leacock's bedroom closet, the writer's jacket and tie still hang at the ready; his spats are still arranged in pairs on shelves. Note the old family trunk brought from England.

The Farmers Market.

COLE BENNETT

The Mariposa Folk Festival

COLE BENNETT

A small room holds the books of all the writers who have won the annual Leacock Medal for Humour award, which is handed out at the end of June. In another room is a study lined with books — part of the extensive collection found in the house. In the library, there is a bronze cast of Leacock. Scattered throughout the home are more than thirty thousand books, manuscripts, and personal papers.

One visit to Leacock's Mariposa is never enough. What makes me return every summer are the fun-filled days at festivals, or are wandering the town eating ice cream cones; sometimes in my bare feet, just like Leacock would have done.

Penelope Johnston is based in Toronto and has written history of medicine stories for the past twenty years. She is working on several historical fiction novels.

IF YOU GO...

Located 129 km north of Toronto (a ninety-minute drive), Orillia is at the junction of Lake Couchiching and Lake Simcoe, which are part of the Trent Severn Waterway. Orillia is the starting point for many Leacock-focused attractions and summer festivities.

MICHEL GROLEAU

Orillia District Chamber of Commerce
T: 705-326-4424.
E: orilinfo@orillia.com
W: orillia.com

Leacock Museum National Historic Site
T: 705-329-1908
W: leacockmuseum.com

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News from Canada's National History Society

History Matters

CANADA'S HISTORY SOCIETY

Canada's National History Society
publisher of **The Beaver** *Canada's History Magazine* and **Kayak** *Canada's History Magazine for Kids*

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Founded in 1994 to popularize Canadian history, the work of Canada's National History Society includes: **The Beaver, Kayak,** the **Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History** to honour the country's best history teachers, and the **Pierre Berton Award** to recognize those who have brought history to a wider audience.

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Hbc

The Beaver was founded in 1920 by the Hudson's Bay Company, whose commit-ment to the History Society and its programs continues today through the ***Hudson's Bay Company History Foundation.***

Building on strengths

History Society annual report

The Society was created in 1993 by the Hudson's Bay Company. Its primary activity was to publish *The Beaver: Canada's History Magazine. The Beaver* has evolved since then, but remains committed to presenting authentic and accurate material in a form that invites participation and enjoyment. The subjects addressed, the use of illustrations, the 'eye appeal' of the covers, and the desire to tell stories that engage and inform are all reflections of the Society's ongoing mission — to popularize interest in Canadian history.

Board Chair
J. Douglas Barrington

Last year was significant for us, in that it underscored the breadth of the programs we now support and deliver. The diversity of the initiatives, as set out in the President's Report, demonstrates our capacity to create programming that serves the interests of our partners and our audience.

As most of us are already too aware, market losses have constrained individual, foundation and corporate flexibility to invest further. Although not immune to these threats, the History Society has weathered the start of the storm well, thanks to the continued commitment of its members, and the tremendous partnerships we've established within the history community. Total donation revenues increased by 46 percent. Individual members responded even more generously than in prior years, increasing their total annual giving by nine percent.

The Board continues to balance the desire to experiment with new projects — which also requires new funding — with the need to protect the History Society's future in these turbulent times. We think we have the right balance between continuing what works well and pursuing new, but unproven, opportunities.

I'd like to thank the Board and the strong team of staff members who ensure our activities remain true to our mission.

— Mr. J. Douglas Barrington completes his term as Chair of the History Society in June 2009.

Helping history

The History Society Board and staff have been carefully monitoring potential impacts of the current worldwide economic crisis.

Readers of our magazines may have read about the specific troubles affecting print media over the past year. *The Beaver* and *Kayak* are both heavily subscription-based, which means that we are not as sensitive to declines in advertising revenues as other titles. However, it also means readers must bear more of the revenue burden for the magazine, or else we're forced to cut costs. Ironically, *The Beaver* enjoyed a modest four percent gain in ad revenues in 2008, which we've reinvested in further editorial development. But *Kayak* is still very dependent on donation support to continue publication.

CEO
Deborah Morrison

Outside of our publishing operations, significant government and private support enabled us to launch three new initiatives this past year, including the Vigil Project, the HBC Local History Grants Program, and *Beaver* Travel Tours.

We know that many of you face similar challenges and choices in your own philanthropy this year, but we hope the stories that follow help to reassure you of the significant return we all gain through your continued support of our mission.

MARIANNE HELM

Celebrating Canada's stories with our youngest citizens

Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids is one of few history resources produced for Canadians under the age of twelve. Distributed in print in English and French, and electronically to teachers, *Kayak* reaches over 36,000 households and classrooms, providing children with a valuable and entertaining resource.

***Kayak*'s 2008 milestones:**

- Awarded a second Parent's Choice Silver Medal; selected as a 2008 Our Choice title by the Canadian Children's Book Centre;
- Magazine format grew to full comic book size;
- Articles licensed for curriculum use by Manitoba Education and by other publishing groups.

1993

Society incorporated by Hudson's Bay Company as independent charitable organization. First order of business is to purchase *The Beaver* magazine for $1.

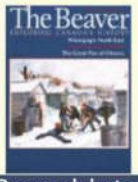
1994

Society establishes Pierre Berton Award for promoting popular interest in Canadian History. Pierre Berton is the inaugural winner.

1995

The Right Honourable Romeo Leblanc establishes the Governor General's Awards for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History.

1996



The Beaver debuts on Canadian newsstands with an initial draw of 900 copies and a cover price of $4.95.

Creating content that's trusted and entertaining

For the first time in its history, a French edition of *The Beaver* magazine was created in 2008, thanks to a generous contribution from the Department of Canadian Heritage. *Le Beaver* was an instant sellout. In total, twelve thousand copies sold on newsstands, breaking every sales record in the history of the magazine.

Other highlights from *The Beaver* last year:

• August–September's "10 Photos That Changed Canada" became the second-best-selling issue in the magazine's history;

• HarperCollins commissioned an expanded coffee-table book based on the "Photos That Changed Canada" summer feature, which will be in bookstores in October 2009.

The 2008 Governor General's Award winners, wearing their GG medals, pose with Governor General Michaëlle Jean, Board Chair J. Douglas Barrington and History Society CEO Deborah Morrison following a special ceremony at Rideau Hall in Ottawa.

MCPL JEAN-FRANÇOIS NERON, RIDEAU HALL

Strengthening the history community

Since 1993, the History Society has supported the broader history community through its Awards programs and modest grants to local organizations. In 2008 the Society worked with the Hudson's Bay Company to distribute $100,000 in grants for local history projects.

The History Society supported the community in many other ways:

• Presenting the Pierre Berton Award as part of the Writer's Trust Benefit to support Pierre Berton House;

• Sponsoring the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, and the Association for Canadian Studies biennial History conference;

• Providing over $25,000 in in-kind advertising and promotional support and over $5,000 in gift subscriptions and prize baskets to charitable events and organizations.

2000

Society hosts first national PATHS conference and announces small grants program to support local and regional history programming.

2002

The Beaver breaks 50,000 in total circulation for the first time.

2004

The Society launches *Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids*.

2005

Society launches HistorySociety.ca. Offers free web access to *Beaver* archives. Creates FurTradeStories.ca to highlight HBC's historic collections.

History Society staff at the University of Winnipeg.

Establishing new partnerships

The Society has a tradition of partnership with teachers, historians, and Canada's leading historical museums and cultural institutions.

2008 featured collaborations with:

- ChaptersIndigo: providing online bookstore services for History Society members;
- National Film Board: online access to purchase videos and DVDs from the complete NFB library;
- University of Toronto Press: series of lectures featuring recently published authors;
- Touchwood Editions: publisher of *The Beaver*'s R.M. Patterson collection of Nahani River stories.

Most notably, the History Society entered a ten-year partnership with the University of Winnipeg. In November 2008 we relocated to the campus to help establish a new Canadian History Centre at the university that will concentrate on bridging the gap between historical research of our history and the communication of those stories to a popular audience. Fall 2009 will see the creation of special public workshops, lecture series and on campus events.

Reaching new audiences through new media

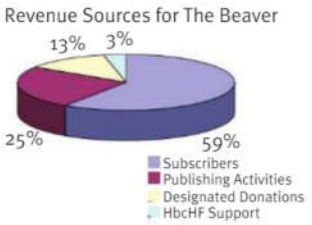
The year 2008 marked the start of a major multi-year investment in Web 2.0 development. HistorySociety.ca will be transformed to provide easy access for anyone interested in Canadian history: academics, public historians, teachers, students, volunteers, and general enthusiasts. It will have a new look that is both fresh and engaging, and offer many multimedia opportunities to interact with the Society and the larger history community.

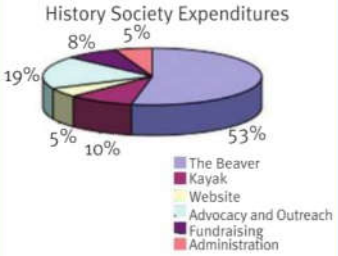
Last year's initiatives included:

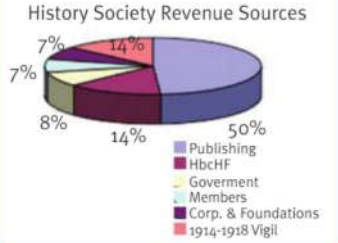
- A complete redesign of the *Kayak* website;
- News Splash, a weekly feed of history news;
- Audio podcasts, photo galleries, pop quizes, past articles, and enhanced online features about *Beaver* stories;
- Canadian Roots, an online discussion forum about genealogy;
- The Reading Den, an electronic newsletter featuring newly published Canadian history books.

History Society by the numbers

Individual members responded even more generously than in previous years, increasing their total annual giving by 9 percent.







2006

HBC History Foundation finances French edition of *Kayak*, produced in partnership with *Les Débrouilliards*.

2007

Society launches first National History Forum for teachers and historians, which takes place in Ottawa.

2008

The Beaver publishes for the first time in French.

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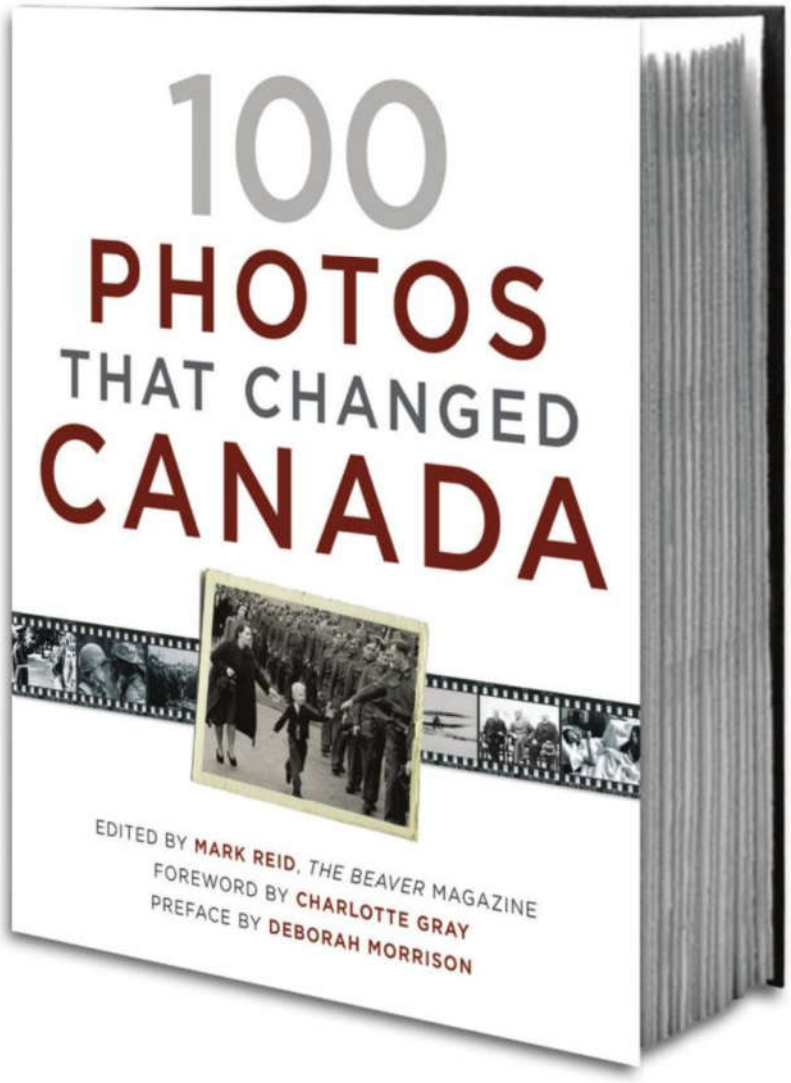

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CANADA'S HISTORY SOCIETY

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The Beaver
CANADA'S HISTORY MAGAZINE

Providing history experiences for Canadians

Surveys have confirmed that Canadians don't know much about our history, but are eager to learn more. The Society is eager to create new opportunities to turn that passive interest into an active one. Beaver Travel Tours — which feature unique history-focused tourism packages — continue in 2009. Last year's Northern Ontario Rail Tour and Manitoba Fur Trade Tour sold out.

Beaver Travel Tour participants

For the 90th Anniversary of the end of the First World War, the Society presented the Vigil Project in partnership with Veterans Affairs Canada. From sunset to sunrise each night from November 4 to 11, 2008, all 68,000 Canadians who died as a result of the First World War were honoured, one by one, as their names were projected onto the National War memorial in Ottawa, and at seven other locations across Canada and in London, England.

Queen Elizabeth attended the opening night in London. One week later, Governor General Michaëlle Jean attended the final sunset ceremony as the last set of names were lit across the monument in Ottawa.

At the end of the week, the Vigil website had received over one million hits and received countless mentions in the media.

Thousands of Canadians attended Vigil sites throughout the week, or took the additional time to share recollections and photographs about their loved ones. It was truly a fitting and poignant tribute.

ON BEHALF OF THE HISTORY SOCIETY AND PROJECT PARTNERS MARTIN CONBOY, R.H. THOMPSON AND ECENTRICARTS INC., WE EXTEND OUR SINCERE GRATITUDE TO THE FOLLOWING FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS FOR MAKING THIS INCREDIBLE TRIBUTE POSSIBLE.

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Canada's National History Society 2008

Honour Roll

Thank You.

Each year, Canada's National History Society makes an appeal for annual donations to support its current programs and the development of new ones. These annual funds provide stabilty for our core programs and enable the History Society to seize unexpected opportunities. This years' fundraising efforts realized a total of $1,558,597 in charitable contributions from our members, corporations, foundations and provincial and federal governments. The History Society extends a special thanks to all of our donors for their generosity. Gifts of $50 or more have been recognized in this honour roll.

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Album

Edward Ernest Gamble is the grandson of Arthur Ernest Gamble and resides in Innisfil, Ontario.

Sweet Summer Treats

Nothing says summer like a walk through the local neighbourhood with the aroma of freshly baked bread and other delectable confections wafting through the air. Such was the pleasure that greeted Torontonians in the early 1900s when they arrived at 1252 Landsdowne at Bloor. Arthur Ernest Gamble was born in Halifax, England, learning his trade of cook and baker in the British Merchant Marine. He served as a "cook's boy" from the age of ten and when he arrived in Canada he set up his own bakery shop. Waiting at the door to welcome you at A. E. Gamble were his eldest daughter Jessie (left) and her colleague. Along with an inviting exterior and pleasant serving staff, the bakery featured an array of goodies — breads, pies, cakes, and jellyrolls were only a few of the tempting treats. There were also huge glass jars of candies just waiting to be weighed on the large metal scale and boxes of Cadbury's chocolates to take home as gifts. And, if you couldn't wait to bite into the delicacies, you could savour them immediately at the several sit-down tables inside. Edward Gamble's grandfather later moved his establishment to St. Clair Avenue, just west of Dufferin Street.

To see an interior shot of A.E. Gamble's bakery shop, go to TheBeaver.ca

Do you have an old photograph that captures a moment, important or ordinary, in Canada's history? If you would like to submit it for possible publication, have it copied (please don't send priceless originals) and mail it to Album, c/o *The Beaver*, P.O. Box 56060, Portage Place RPO, Winnipeg, MB, R3B 0G9. Or email your submission to album@thebeaver.ca. Include a brief description of the photo, including its date and location. If possible, identify people in the photograph and provide further information about the event or situation illustrated. To have your posted submission returned, please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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